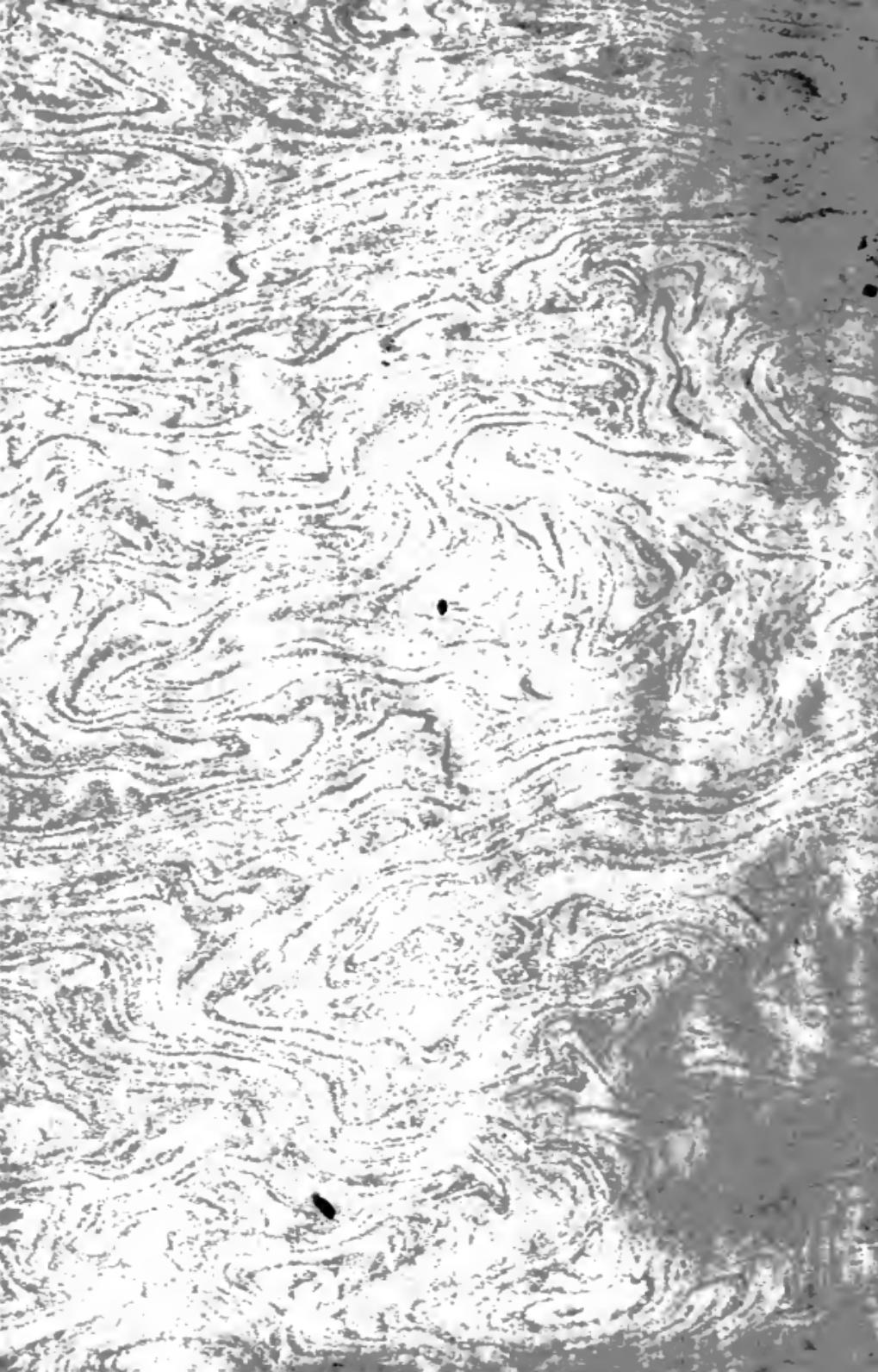


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A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

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A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON  
R. BROWNING



LONDON AND GLASGOW

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# A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

## A TRAGEDY.

### PERSONS.

MILDRED TRESHAM.

GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.

THOROLD, Lord Tresham.

AUSTIN TRESHAM.

HENRY, Earl Mertoun.

GERARD.

Other Retainers of Lord Tresham.

TIME, 17—.

### ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The interior of a Lodge in LORD TRESHAM's Park. Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his Mansion. GERARD, the Warrener, sitting alone, his back to a table on which are flagons, &c.*

*1st Ret.* Ay—do—push, friends, and then you'll push down me.

—What for? Does any hear a runner's foot,

Or a steed's trample, or a coach-wheel's  
cry

Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?  
But there's no breeding in a man of you  
Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,  
Old Gerard!

*Ger.* Save your courtesies, my friend.  
Here is my place.

*2nd Ret.* Now, Gerard, out with it!  
What makes you sullen, this of all the days  
I' the year? To-day that, young, rich,  
bountiful,  
Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they  
match  
With our Lord Tresham thro' the country-  
side,  
Is coming here in utmost bravery  
To ask our Master's Sister's hand?

*Ger.* What then?  
*2nd Ret.* What then? Why, you she  
speaks to, if she meets.  
Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart  
The boughs to let her thro' her forest walks,  
You, always favourite for your no-deserts,  
You've heard, these three days, how Earl  
Mertoun sues  
To lay his heart, and house, and broad  
lands too,  
At Lady Mildred's feet — and while we  
squeeze  
Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss

One congee of the least page in his train,  
 You sit o' one side—"there's the Earl,"  
 say I—

"What then," say you !

*3rd Ret.* I'll wager he has let  
 Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred,  
 swim

Over the falls and gain the river !

*Ger.* Ralph,

Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day  
 For you and for your hawks ?

*4th Ret.* Let Gerard be !  
 He's coarse-grained, like his carved black  
 cross-bow stock.

Ha, look now, while we squabble with him,  
 look !

Well done, now—is not this beginning, now,  
 To purpose ?

*1st Ret.* Our retainers look as fine—  
 That's comfort ! Lord, how Richard holds  
 himself

With his white staff ! Will not a knave  
 behind

Prick him upright ?

*4th Ret.* He's only bowing, fool !  
 The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

*1st Ret.* That's comfort. Here's a very  
 cavalcade !

*3rd Ret.* I don't see wherefore Richard,  
 and his troop  
 Of silk and silver varlets there, should find

Their perfumed selves so indispensable  
 On high days, holy-days ! Would it so  
 disgrace  
 Our Family, if I, for instance, stood—  
 In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,  
 A leash of greyhounds in my left ?—

*Ger.* —With Hugh

The logman for supporter—in his right  
 The bill-hook—in his left the brushwood-  
 shears !

*3rd Ret.* Out on you, crab ! What next,  
 what next ? The Earl !

*1st Ret.* Oh, Walter, groom, our horses,  
 do they match

The Earl's ? Alas, that first pair of the  
 six—

They paw the ground—Ah, Walter ! and  
 that brute

Just on his haunches by the wheel !

*6th Ret.* Ay—Ay !

You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,  
 At soups and sauces—what's a horse to  
 you ?

D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the  
 midst

So cunningly ?—then, Philip, mark this  
 further ;

No leg has he to stand on !

*1st Ret.* No ? That's comfort.

*2nd Ret.* Peace, Cook ! The Earl de-  
 scends.—Well, Gerard, see .

The Earl at least ! Corne, there's a proper  
man,  
I hope ! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or  
Swede,  
Has got a starrier eye—

*3rd Ret.* His eyes are blue—  
But leave my hawks alone !

*4th Ret.* So young, and yet  
So tall and shapely !

*5th Ret.* Here's Lord Tresham's self !  
There now—there's what a nobleman should  
be !

He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like  
A House's Head !

*2nd Ret.* But you'd not have a boy  
—And what's the Earl beside?—possess too  
soon

That stateliness ?

*1st Ret.* Our Master takes his hand—  
Richard and his white staff are on the  
move—

Back fall our people—(tsh !—there's Timothy  
Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties—  
And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off !)  
—At last I see our Lord's back and his  
friend's—

And the whole beautiful bright company .  
Close round them—in they go !

[Jumping down from the window-bench,  
and making for the table and its jugs,  
&c.] Good health, long life,

Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his  
House!

*6th Ret.* My father drove his father first to  
court,

After his marriage-day—ay, did he!

*2nd Ret.* God bless

Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl!

Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!

*Ger.* Drink, my boys:

Don't mind me—all's not right about me—  
drink!

*2nd Ret. [Aside.]* He's vexed, now, that  
he let the show escape!

[To GER.] Remember that the Earl returns  
this way—

*Ger.* That way?

*2nd Ret.* Just so.

*Ger.* Then my way's here. [Goes.

*2nd Ret.* Old Gerard

Will die soon—mind, I said it! He was  
used

To care about the pitifullest thing  
That touched the House's honour, not an eye  
But his could see wherein—and on a cause  
Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard  
Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away  
In cares that this was right, nor that was  
    wrong,

Such a point decorous, and such by rule—  
(He knew such niceties, no herald more)  
And now—you see his humour: die he will!

*2nd Ret.* God help him ! Who's for the  
great servants' hall  
To hear what's going on inside ! They'd  
follow  
Lord Tresham into the saloon.

*3rd Ret.* I !—

*4th Ret.* I !—

Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,  
Some hint of how the parley goes inside !  
Prosperity to the great House once more—  
Here's the last drop !

*1st Ret.* Have at you. Boys,  
hurrah !

### SCENE II.—*A Saloon in the Mansion.*

*Enter LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN ;  
AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN.*

*Tresh.* I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet  
once more  
To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name  
—Noble among the noblest in itself,  
Yet taking in your person, fame avers,  
New price and lustre,—(as that gem you  
wear,  
Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,  
Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last  
lord,  
Seems to re-kindle at the core)—your name  
Would win you welcome !—

*Mer.*

Thanks!

*Tresh.*

—But add to that,

The worthiness and grace and dignity  
Of your proposal for uniting both  
Our Houses even closer than respect  
Unites them now—add these, and you must  
grant

One favour more, nor that the least,—to  
think

The welcome I should give;—'tis given!

My lord,

My only brother, Austin—he's the King's.  
Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—betrothed  
To Austin: all are yours.

*Mer.*

I thank you—less

For the expressed commendings which your  
seal,

And only that, authenticates—forbids  
My putting from me . . . to my heart I  
take

Your praise . . . but praise less claims my  
gratitude,

Than the indulgent insight it implies  
Of what must needs be uppermost with one  
Who comes, like me, with the bare leave  
to ask,

In weighed and measured unimpassioned  
words,

A gift, which, if as calmly 'tis denied,  
He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,  
Despair within his soul:—that I dare ask

Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence  
That gift, I have to thank you.—Yes, Lord  
Tresham,  
I love your sister—as you'd have one love  
That lady . . . oh more, more I love her !  
Wealth,  
Rank, all the world thinks *me*, they're yours,  
you know,  
To hold or part with, at your choice—but  
grant  
My true self, *me* without a rood of land,  
A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,  
Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death  
or life ?

*Guen.* [Apart to Aus.] Why, this is  
loving, Austin !

*Aus.* He's so young !

*Guen.* Young ? Old enough, I think, to  
half surmise

He never had obtained an entrance here,  
Were all this fear and trembling needed.

*Aus.* Hush !

He reddens.

*Guen.* Mark him, Austin ; that's  
true love !

Ours must begin again.

*Tresh.* We'll sit, my lord.  
Ever with best desert goes diffidence.  
I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.  
That I am wholly satisfied with you  
On this occasion, when a falcon's eye

Were dull compared with mine to search out  
faults,  
Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give  
Or to refuse.

*Mer.* But you, you grant my suit?  
I have your word if hers?

*Tresh.* My best of words  
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.  
Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?

*Mer.* I . . . I . . . our two demesnes,  
remember, touch—  
I have been used to wander carelessly  
After my stricken game—the heron roused  
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken  
wing  
Thro' thicks and glades a mile in yours,—  
or else

Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight  
And lured me after her from tree to tree,  
I marked not whither . . . I have come  
upon

The Lady's wondrous beauty unaware,  
And—and then . . . I have seen her.

*Guen.* [*Aside to Aus.*] Note that mode  
Of faultering out that when a lady passed  
He, having eyes, did see her! You had  
said—

“On such a day I scanned her, head to foot;  
“Observed a red, where red should not have  
been,  
“Outside her elbow; but was pleased enough

"Upon the whole." Let such irreverent talk  
Be lessoned for the future !

*Tresh.* What's to say

May be said briefly. She has never known  
A mother's care ; I stand for father too.  
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems—  
You cannot know the good and tender heart,  
Its girl's trust, and its woman's constancy,  
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,  
How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free  
As light where friends are—how embued  
with lore

The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet  
The . . . one might know I talked of

Mildred—thus

We brothers talk !

*Mer.* . I thank you.

*Tresh.* In a word,

Control's not for this lady ; but her wish  
To please me outstrips in its subtlety  
My power of being pleased—herself creates  
The want she means to satisfy. My heart  
Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.  
Can I say more ?

*Mer.* No more—thanks, thanks—  
no more !

*Tresh.* This matter then discussed . . .

*Mer.* . . . We'll waste no breath  
On aught less precious—I'm beneath the roof  
That holds her : while I thought of that, my  
speech

To you would wander—as it must not do,  
 Since as you favour me I stand or fall.  
 I pray you suffer that I take my leave !

*Tresh.* With less regret 'tis suffered, that  
 again

We meet, I hope, so shortly.

*Mer.* We? again?—

Ah yes, forgive me—when shall . . . you  
 will crown

Your goodness by forthwith apprising me  
 When . . . if . . . the Lady will appoint  
 a day

For me to wait on you—and her.

*Tresh.* So soon  
 As I am made acquainted with her thoughts  
 On your proposal—howsoe'er they lean—  
 A messenger shall bring you the result.

*Mer.* You cannot bind me more to you,  
 my lord.

Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew  
 A converse ne'er to disunite again.

*Tresh.* So may it prove !

*Mer.* You, Lady, you, Sir, take  
 My humble salutation

*Guen. and Aus.* Thanks !

*Tresh.* Within there !  
 [Servants enter. TRESHAM conducts  
 MERTOUN to the door. Meantime AUSTIN  
 remarks,

Well,  
 Here I have an advantage of the Earl,

Confess now! I'd not think that all was  
safe

Because my lady's brother stood my friend.

Why, he makes sure of her—"do you say,  
yes—

"She'll not say, no"—what comes it to  
beside?

I should have prayed the brother, "speak  
this speech,

"For Heaven's sake urge this on her—  
put in this—

"Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other  
thing,—

"Then set down what she says, and how she  
looks,

"And if she smiles," and (in an under  
breath)

"Only let her accept me, and do you

"And all the world refuse me, if you dare!"

Guen. That way you'd take, friend  
Austin? What a shame

I was your cousin tamely from the first

Your bride, and all this fervour's run to  
waste!

Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?

The Earl's a fool.

Aus. Here's Thorold. Tell him so!

Tresh. [Returning.] Now, voices, voices!

'St! the lady's first!

How seems he?—seems he not . . . come,  
faith give fraud

The mercy-stroke whenever they engage !  
 Down with fraud—up with faith ! How  
 seems the Earl ?

A name ! a blazon ! if you knew their worth,  
 As you will never ! come—the Earl ?

*Guen.* He's young.

*Tresh.* What's she? an infant save in heart  
 and brain.

Young ! Mildred is fourteen, remark ! And  
 you . . .

Austin, how old is she ?

*Guen.* There's tact for you !

I meant that being young was good excuse  
 If one should tax him . . .

*Tresh.* Well?

*Guen.* —With lacking wit.

*Tresh.* He lacked wit? Where might he  
 lack wit, so please you?

*Guen.* In standing straighter than the  
 steward's rod

And making you the tiresomest harangues,  
 Instead of slipping over to my side  
 And softly whispering in my ear, "Sweet  
 lady,

" Your cousin there will do me detriment

" He little dreams of—he's absorbed, I see,

" In my old name and fame—be sure he'll  
 leave

" My Mildred, when his best account of me

" Is ended, in full confidence I wear

" My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.

"I'm lost unless your gentleness vouch-safes" . . .

*Tresh.* . . . "To give a best of best accounts, yourself,

"Of me and my demerits." You are right !  
He should have said what now I say for him.  
You golden creature, will you help us all ?  
Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but  
you

—You are . . . what Austin only knows !  
Come up,

All three of us—she's in the Library  
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast.  
Precede !

*Guen.* Austin, how we must—!

*Tresh.* Must what ? Must speak truth,  
Malignant tongue ! Detect one fault in him !  
I challenge you !

*Guen.* Witchcraft's a fault in him,  
For you're bewitched.

*Tresh.* What's urgent we obtain  
Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-morrow—

Next day at farthest.

*Guen.* Ne'er instruct me !

*Tresh.* Come !  
—He's out of your good graces since,  
forsooth,

He stood not as he'd carry us by storm  
With his perfections ! You're for the composed,

Manly, assured, becoming confidence!  
—Get her to say, "to-morrow," and  
    I'll give you . . .  
I'll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled  
With petting and snail-paces. Will you?  
    Come!

**SCENE III.—MILDRED'S Chamber.** *A painted window overlooks the park. MILDRED and GUENDOLEN.*

*Guen.* Now, Mildred, spare those pains.  
I have not left

Our talkers in the Library, and climbed  
The wearisome ascent to this your bower  
In company with you,—I have not dared . . .  
Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you  
Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood,  
Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell—  
—Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most  
Firm-rooted heresy—your suitor's eyes,  
He would maintain, were gray instead of  
blue—

I think I brought him to contrition!—Well,  
I have not done such things, (all to deserve  
A minute's quiet cousin's-talk with you,)  
To be dismissed so coolly!

Mil. Guendolen,  
What have I done . . . what could suggest . . .

*Guen.* There, there !  
Do I not comprehend you'd be alone  
To throw those testimonies in a heap,  
Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,  
With that poor, silly, heartless Guendolen's  
Ill-timed, misplaced, attempted smartnesses—  
And sift their sense out? now, I come to  
spare you

Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and  
have !

Demand, be answered ! Lack I ears and  
eyes ?

Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table  
The Conqueror dined on when he landed  
first,

Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take—  
The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great  
meed ?

Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes !

*Mil.* My brother—  
Did he . . . you said that he received him  
well ?

*Guen.* If I said only "well" I said not  
much—

Oh, stay—which brother ?

*Mil.* Thorold ! who—who else ?

*Guen.* Thorold (a secret) is too proud by  
half,—

Nay, hear me out—with us he's even gentler  
Than we are with our birds. Of this great  
House

The least retainer that e'er caught his glance  
 Would die for him, real dying—no mere talk :  
 And in the world, the court, if men would cite  
 The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's name  
 Rises of its clear nature to their lips :  
 But he should take men's homage, trust in it,  
 And care no more about what drew it down.  
 He has desert, and that, acknowledgment ;  
 Is he content ?

*Mil.* You wrong him, Guendolen.

*Guen.* He's proud, confess ; so proud with  
 brooding o'er  
 The light of his interminable line,  
 An ancestry with men all paladins,  
 And women all . . .

*Mil.* Dear Guendolen, 'tis late !  
 When yonder purple pane the climbing moon  
 Pierces, I know 'tis midnight.

*Guen.* Well, that Thorold  
 Should rise up from such musings and receive  
 One come audaciously to graft himself  
 Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,  
 No slightest spot in such an one. . . .

*Mil.* Who finds  
 A spot in Mertoun ?

*Guen.* Not your brother ; there-  
 fore,  
 Not the whole world.

*Mil.* I'm weary, Guendolen.—  
 Bear with me !

*Guen.* I am foolish.

*Guen.* Good night and rest to you.  
I said how gracefully his mantle lay  
Beneath the rings of his light hair?

*Mil.* Brown hair!

Guen. Brown? why it *is* brown—how could you know that?

Mil. How? did not you—Oh, Austin  
'twas, declared  
His hair was light, not brown—my head!—  
and, look,  
The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber!

Sweet,  
Good night!

*Guen.* Forgive me—sleep the soundlier  
for me!

[Going, she turns suddenly.

Mildred !

Perdition! all's discovered.—Thorold finds  
—That the Earl's greatest of all grand-  
mothers

Was grander daughter still--to that fair  
dame

Whose garter slipped down at the famous  
dance ! [Goes.

*Mil.* Is she—can she be really gone at last?

**My heart—I shall not reach the window;  
Needs**

**Must I have sinned much, so to suffer !**

[She lifts the small lamp which is suspended before the Virgin's image in the window, and places it by the purple pane. There !

[She returns to the seat in front.

Mildred and Mertoun ! Mildred, with consent Of all the world and Thorold,—Mertoun's bride !

Too late ! 'Tis sweet to think of; sweeter still

To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up  
The curse of the beginning ; but I know  
It comes too late—'twill sweetest be of all  
To dream my soul away and die upon !

[A noise without.

The voice ! Oh ! why, why glided sin the snake

Into the Paradise Heaven meant us both ?

[The window opens softly.—A low voice sings.

There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer than the purest ;

And her noble heart's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith's the surest :

And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre

Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-grape cluster,

Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted marble :

Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling, the bird's warble !

[A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the window.

And this woman says, " My days were sunless and  
my nights were moonless,  
" Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's  
heart's outbreak tuneless,  
" If you loved me not ! " And I who—(ah, for words  
of flame ! ) adore her!  
Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably  
before her—

[*He enters—approaches her seat, and bends over her.*

I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice  
takes me,  
And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as  
hers she makes me !

[*The Earl throws off his slouched hat and long cloak.*

My very heart sings, so I sing, beloved !  
*Mil.* Sit, Henry—do not take my hand.  
*Mer.* 'Tis mine !

The meeting that appalled us both so much  
Is ended.

*Mil.* What begins now ?

*Mer.* Happiness  
Such as the world contains not.

*Mil.* That is it.  
Our happiness would, as you say, exceed  
The whole world's best of blisses : we—do  
we

Deserve that ? Utter to your soul, what  
mine

Long since, beloved, has grown used to hear,  
Like a death-knell, so much regarded once,

And so familiar now ; this will not be !

*Mer.* Oh, Mildred, have I met your brother's face,  
Compelled myself—if not to speak untruth,  
Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside  
The truth, as what had e'er prevailed on me  
Save you, to venture ? Have I gained at last

Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,  
And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too ?

Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break  
On the strange unrest of our night, confused  
With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see  
No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops  
On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,  
And no expressless glory in the east ?

When I am by you, to be ever by you,  
When I have won you and may worship you,  
Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be?"

*Mil.* Sin has surprised us ; so will punishment.

*Mer.* No—me alone, who sinned alone !

*Mil.* The night

You likened our past life to—was it storm  
Throughout to you then, Henry ?

*Mer.* Of your life  
I spoke—what am I, what my life, to waste  
A thought about when you are by me ?—  
you

It was, I said my folly called the storm

And pulled the night upon.—'Twas day  
with me—

Perpetual dawn with me.

*Mil.* Come what, come will,  
You have been happy—take my hand !

*Mer.* [After a pause.] How good  
Your brother is ! I figured him a cold—  
Shall I say, haughty man ?

*Mil.* They told me all.  
I know all.

*Mer.* It will soon be over.

*Mil.* Over ?  
Oh, what is over ? what must I live thro'  
And say, "'tis over ?" Is our meeting over ?  
Have I received in presence of them all  
The partner of my guilty love,—with brow  
Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips  
Which make believe that when they strive  
to form

Replies to you and tremble as they strive,  
It is the nearest ever they approached  
A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's  
. . . lip—

With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that  
*is* . . .

Ah, God ! some prodigy of thine will stop  
This planned piece of deliberate wickedness  
In its birth even—some fierce leprous spot  
Will mar the brows dissimulating—I  
Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by  
heart,

But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful  
story,  
The love, the shame, and the despair—with  
them  
Round me aghast as men round some cursed  
fount

That should spirt water, and spouts blood.  
I'll not

. . . Henry, you do not wish that I should  
draw

This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace  
That's gone from me—gone once, and gone  
for ever!

*Mer.* Mildred, my honour is your own.  
I'll share

Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.

A word informs your brother I retract

This morning's offer; time will yet bring  
forth

Some better way of saving both of us.

*Mil.* I'll meet their faces, Mertoun!

*Mer.* When? to-morrow

Get done with it!

*Mil.* Oh, Henry, not to-morrow!

Next day! I never shall prepare my words  
And looks and gestures sooner!—How you  
must

Despise me!

*Mer.* Mildred, break it if you choose,  
A heart the love of you uplifted—still  
Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,

To Heaven ! but, Mildred, answer me,—first  
pace

The chamber with me—once again—now, say  
Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me  
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)  
—Contempt for you in ! I would pluck it off  
And cast it from me !—but no—no, you'll  
not

Repeat that?—will you, Mildred, repeat  
that?

*Mil.* Dear Henry—

*Mer.* I was scarce a boy—  
e'en now

What am I more? And you were infantine  
When first I met you—why, your hair fell  
loose

On either side!—my fool's cheek reddens  
now

Only in the recalling how it burned  
That morn to see the shape of many a dream  
—You know we boys are prodigal of charms  
To her we dream of—I had heard of one,  
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to  
her,

Might speak to her, might live and die her  
own,

Who knew?—I spoke—Oh, Mildred, feel  
you not

That now, while I remember every glance  
Of yours, each word of yours, with power  
to test

And weigh them in the diamond scales of  
Pride,  
Resolved the treasure of a first and last  
Heart's love shall have been bartered at its  
worth,

—That now I think upon your purity  
And utter ignorance of guilt—your own  
Or other's guilt—the girlish undisguised  
Delight at a strange novel prize—(I talk  
A silly language, but interpret, you !)  
If I, with fancy at its full, and reason  
Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,  
If you had pity on my passion, pity  
On my protested sickness of the soul  
To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and  
watch  
Your eyelids and the eyes beneath—if you  
Accorded gifts and knew not they were  
gifts—

If I grew mad at last with enterprise  
And must behold my beauty in her bower  
Or perish—(I was ignorant of even  
My own desires—what then were you ?) if  
sorrow—

Sin—if the end came—must I now renounce  
My reason, blind myself to light, say truth  
Is false and lie to God and my own soul ?  
Contempt were all of this !

*Mil.*                                   Do you believe . . .  
Or, Henry, I'll not wrong you—you believe  
That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er

The past ! We'll love on—you will love me still !

*Mer.* Oh, to love less what one has injured ! Dove,  
Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast—

Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength ?

Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee ?

Bloom o'er my crest my fight-mark and device !

Mildred, I love you and you love me !

*Mil.* Go !

Be that your last word. I shall sleep tonight.

*Mer.* This is not our last meeting ?

*Mil.* One night more.

*Mer.* And then—think, then !

*Mil.* Then, no sweet courtship-days,  
No dawning consciousness of love for us,  
No strange and palpitating births of sense  
From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,

Reserves and confidences: morning's over !

*Mer.* How else should love's perfected noontide follow ?

All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

*Mil.* So may it be ! but—

You are cautious, love ?

Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls ?

*Mer.* Oh, trust me ! Then our final meeting's fixed ?

To-morrow night ?

*Mil.* Farewell ! Stay, Henry  
. . . wherefore ?

His foot is on the yew-tree bough—the turf  
Receives him—now the moonlight as he runs  
Embraces him—but he must go—is gone—  
Ah, once again he turns—thanks, thanks,  
my love !

He's gone—Oh, I'll believe him every word !  
I was so young—I loved him so—I had  
No mother—God forgot me—and I fell.  
There may be pardon yet—all's doubt  
beyond.

Surely the bitterness of death is past !

## ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Library.*

*Enter LORD TRESHAM hastily.*

This way—In, Gerard, quick !

[As GERARD enters TRESHAM secures  
the door.]

Now speak ! or, wait—  
I'll bid you speak directly. [Seats himself.]

Now repeat  
Firmly and circumstantially the tale

You've just now told me; it eludes me;  
either

I did not listen, or the half is gone  
Away from me—How long have you lived  
here?

Here in my house, your father kept our  
woods

Before you?

*Ger.* —As his father did, my lord.

I have been eating sixty years, almost,  
Your bread.

*Tresh.* Yes, yes—You ever were of all  
The servants in my father's house, I know,  
The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.

*Ger.* I'll speak  
God's truth: night after night . . .

*Tresh.* Since when?

*Ger.* At least  
A month—each midnight has some man  
access

To Lady Mildred's chamber.

*Tresh.* Tush, "access"—  
No wide words like "access" to me!

*Ger.* He runs  
Along the woodside, crosses to the south,  
Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .

*Tresh.* The last great yew-tree?

*Ger.* You might stand upon  
The main boughs like a platform . . . Then  
he . . .

*Tresh.* Quick!

*Ger.* . . . Climbs up, and, where they  
    lessen at the top,  
—I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,  
I think—for this I do not vouch—a line  
That reaches to the Lady's casement—

*Tresh.* —Which

He enters not! Gerard—some wretched fool  
Dares pry into my sister's privacy!  
When such are young, it seems a precious  
    thing

To have approached,—to merely have ap-  
    proached,  
Got sight of, the abode of her they set  
Their frantic thoughts upon! He does not  
    enter?

Gerard?

*Ger.* There is a lamp that's full in the  
    midst,  
Under a red square in the painted glass  
Of Lady Mildred's . . .

*Tresh.* Leave that name out! Well?  
That lamp?

*Ger.* Is moved at midnight higher up  
To one pane—a small dark-blue pane—he  
    waits  
For that among the boughs; at sight of  
    that,  
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,  
Open the Lady's casement, enter there . . .

*Tresh.* —And stay?

*Ger.* An hour, two hours.

*Tresh.* And this you saw  
Once?—twice?—quick!

*Ger.* Twenty times.

*Tresh.* And what brings you  
Under the yew-trees?

*Ger.* The first night I left  
My range so far, to track the stranger  
stag

That broke the pale, I saw the man.

*Tresh.* Yet sent  
No cross-bow shaft thro' the marauder?

*Ger.* But  
He came, my lord, the first time he was  
seen,

In a great moonlight, light as any day,  
*From* Lady Mildred's chamber.

*Tresh.* [After a pause.] You have no  
cause—

—Who could have cause to do my sister  
wrong?

*Ger.* Oh, my lord, only once—let me this  
once

Speak what is on my mind! Since first I  
noted

All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net  
Plucked me this way and that—fire, if I  
turned

To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire,  
If down I flung myself and strove to die.

The lady could not have been seven years old  
When I was trusted to conduct her safe

Thro' the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white  
fawn

I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand  
Within a month. She ever had a smile  
To greet me with—she . . . if it could undo  
What's done to lop each limb from off this  
trunk . . .

All that is foolish talk, not fit for you—  
I mean, I could not speak and bring her  
hurt

For Heaven's compelling: but when I was  
fixed

To hold my peace, each morsel of your food  
Eaten beneath your roof, my birthplace too,  
Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in  
doubts

What it behoved me do. This morn it  
seemed

Either I must confess to you, or die:  
Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm  
That crawls, to have betrayed my Lady!

*Tresh.*                                   No—

No—Gerard!

*Ger.*                                   Let me go!

*Tresh.*                                   A man, you say—  
What man? Young? Not a vulgar hind?  
What dress?

*Ger.* A slouched hat and a large dark  
foreign cloak

Wraps his whole form: even his face is  
hid;

But I should judge him young ; no hind, be  
sure !

*Tresh.* Why ?

*Ger.* He is ever armed : his sword  
projects

Beneath the cloak.

*Tresh.* Gerard,—I will not say  
No word, no breath of this !

*Ger.* Thanks, thanks, my lord !  
[Goes.

[TRESHAM paces the room. After a pause,  
Oh, thought's absurd !—as with some  
monstrous fact

That, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to  
give

Merciful God that made the sun and stars,  
The waters and the green delights of earth,  
The lie ! I apprehend the monstrous fact—  
Yet know the Maker of all worlds is good,  
And yield my reason up, inadequate  
To reconcile what yet I do behold—  
Blasting my sense ! There's cheerful day  
outside—

This is my library—and this the chair  
My father used to sit in carelessly,  
After his soldier-fashion, while I stood  
Between his knees to question him—and  
here,

Gerard, our gray retainer,—as he says,  
Fed with our food from sire to son an  
age,—

Has told a story—I am to believe !  
 That Mildred . . . oh, no, no ! both tales  
     are true,  
 Her pure cheek's story and the forester's !  
 Would she, or could she, err—much less,  
     confound  
 All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . .  
     Heaven  
 Keep me within its hand !—I will sit here  
 Until thought settles and I see my course.  
 Avert, oh God, only this woe from me !

*[As he sinks his head between his arms on  
 the table, GUENDOLEN's voice is heard at  
 the door.]*

Lord Tresham ! [She knocks.] Is Lord  
 Tresham there ?

*[TRESHAM, hastily turning, pulls down the  
 first book above him and opens it.]*

Tresh. Come in ! [She enters.]

Ah, Guendolen—good morning.

Guen. Nothing more ?

Tresh. What should I say more ?

Guen. Pleasant question ! more ?

This more ! Did I besiege poor Mildred's  
 brain

Last night till close on morning with "the  
 Earl"—

"The Earl"—whose worth did I asseverate  
 Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,  
 What is all this ? You are not well !

Tresh. Who, I ?

You laugh at me.

*Guen.* Has what I'm fain to hope  
Arrived, then? Does that huge tome show  
some blot  
In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back  
Than Arthur's time?

*Tresh.* When left you Mildred's  
chamber?

*Guen.* Oh late enough, I told you! The  
main thing

To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,  
Content yourself, she'll grant this paragon  
Of Earls no such ungracious . . .

*Tresh.* Send her here!

*Guen.* Thorold?

*Tresh.* I mean—acquaint her, Guen-  
dolen—

—But mildly!

*Guen.* Mildly?

*Tresh.* Ah, you guess'd aright!  
I am not well—there is no hiding it.  
But tell her I would see her at her leisure—  
That is, at once! here in the Library!  
The passage in that old Italian book  
We hunted for so long is found, say,—  
found—

And if I let it slip again . . . you see,  
That she must come—and instantly!

*Guen.* I'll die  
Piecemeal, record that, if there have not  
gloomed

Some blot i' the 'scutcheon !

*Tresh.* Go ! or, Guendolen,  
Be you at call,—with Austin, if you choose,—  
In the adjoining gallery—There, go !

[GUENDOLEN goes.]

Another lesson to me ! you might bid  
A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct  
Some sly investigation point by point  
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me  
    catch

The inquisitorial cleverness some praise !  
If you had told me yesterday, " There's one  
" You needs must circumvent and practise  
    with,

" Entrap by policies, if you would worm  
" The truth out—and that one is—Mildred ! "

There—

There—reasoning is thrown away on it !  
Prove she's unchaste . . . why you may  
    after prove

That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you  
    will !

Where I can comprehend nought, nought's  
    to say,

Or do, or think ! Force on me but the first  
Abomination,—then outpour all plagues,  
And I shall ne'er make count of them !

*Enter MILDRED.*

*Mil.* What book  
Is it I wanted, Thorold ? Guendolen

Thought you were pale—you are not pale !  
That book ?

That's Latin surely !

*Tresh.* Mildred—here's a line—  
(Don't lean on me—I'll English it for you).

"Love conquers all things." What love  
conquers them ?

What love should you esteem—best love ?

*Mil.* True love.

*Tresh.* I mean, and should have said,  
whose love is best

Of all that love or that profess to love ?

*Mil.* The list's so long—there's father's,  
mother's, husband's . . .

*Tresh.* Mildred, I do believe a brother's  
love

For a sole sister must exceed them all !

For see now, only see ! there's no alloy  
Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold  
Of other loves—no gratitude to claim ;  
You never gave her life—not even aught  
That keeps life—never tended her, instructed,  
Enriched her—so your love can claim no  
right

O'er hers save pure love's claim—that's what  
I call

Freedom from earthliness. You'll never hope  
To be such friends, for instance, she and you,  
As when you hunted cowslips in the woods,  
Or played together in the meadow hay.  
Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and your  
worth

Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,  
There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed  
esteem,  
—Much head these make against the new-  
comer !

The startling apparition—the strange youth—  
Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or,  
say,

Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all  
change

This Ovid ever sang about !) your soul  
. . . *Her* soul, that is,—the sister's soul !  
With her

'Twas winter yesterday ; now, all is warmth,  
The green leaf's springing and the turtle's  
voice,

"Arise and come away !" Come whither ?  
—far

Enough from the esteem, respect, and all  
The brother's somewhat insignificant  
Array of rights ! all which he knows before—  
Has calculated on so long ago !

I think such love, (apart from yours and  
mine,)

Contented with its little term of life,  
Intending to retire betimes, aware  
How soon the background must be place  
for it,

I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds  
All the world's loves in its unworldliness.

*Mil.* What is this for ?

*Tresh.* This, Mildred, is it for !  
 Oh, no, I cannot go to it so soon !  
 That's one of many points my haste left out—  
 Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-  
 slight film

Between the being tied to you by birth,  
 And you, until those slender threads compose  
 A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes  
 And fears and fancies, all her life, from  
 yours—

So close you live and yet so far apart !  
 And must I rend this web, tear up, break  
 down

The sweet and palpitating mystery  
 That makes her sacred ? You—for you I  
 mean,

Shall I speak—Shall I not speak ?

*Mil.* Speak !  
*Tresh.* I will.

Is there a story men could—any man  
 Could tell of you, you would conceal from me ?  
 I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip !  
 Say, "There is no such story men could  
 tell,"

And I'll believe you, tho' I disbelieve  
 The world . . . the world of better men  
 than I,

And women such as I suppose you—Speak !  
 [After a pause.] Not speak ? Explain then !  
 clear it up, then ! Move

Some of the miserable weight away

That presses lower than the grave ! Not speak ?

Some of the dead weight, Mildred ! Ah, if I Could bring myself to plainly make their charge

Against you ! Must I, Mildred ? Silent still ?

[*After a pause.*] Is there a gallant that has night by night

Admittance to your chamber ?

[*After a pause.*] Then, his name ! Till now, I only had a thought for you— But now,—his name !

*Mil.* Thorold, do you devise Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit There be ! 'tis nought to say that I'll endure And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to purge

Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire— But do not plunge me into other guilt !

Oh, guilt enough ! I cannot tell his name.

*Tresh.* Then judge yourself ! How should I act ? Pronounce !

*Mil.* Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt me thus !

To die here in this chamber by that sword Would seem like punishment—so should I glide

Like an arch-cheat, into extrekest bliss ! 'Twere easily arranged for me ! but you— What would become of you ?

*Tresh.* And what will now  
Become of me? I'll hide your shame and  
mine

From every eye; the dead must heave their  
hearts

Under the marble of our chapel-floor;  
They cannot rise and blast you! You may  
wed

Your paramour above our mother's tomb;  
Our mother cannot move from 'neath your  
foot.

We two will somehow wear this one day  
out:

But with to-morrow hastens here—the Earl!  
The youth without suspicion that faces come  
From Heaven, and hearts from . . . whence  
proceed such hearts?

I have despatched last night at your com-  
mand

A missive bidding him present himself  
To-morrow here—thus much is said—the  
rest

Is understood as if 'twere written down—  
“His suit finds favour in your eyes,”—now  
dictate

This morning's letter that shall countermand  
Last night's—do dictate that!

*Mil.* But, Thorold—if  
I will receive him as I said?

*Tresh.* . . . *The Earl?*  
*Mil.* I will receive him!

*Tresh.* [Starting up.] Ho there ! Guen-dolen !

*GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.*

And, Austin, you are welcome too ! Look there !

The woman there !

*Aus. and Guen.* How ? Mildred ?

*Tresh.* Mildred once !

Now the receiver night by night, when sleep  
Blesses the inmates of her father's house,  
—I say, the soft sly wanton that receives  
Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof which  
holds

You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held  
A thousand Treshams—never one like her !  
No lighter of the signal lamp her quick  
Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness  
To mix with breath as foul ! no loosener  
Of the lattice, practised in the stealthy  
tread,

The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go !

Not one composer of the Bacchant's mien  
Into—what you thought Mildred's, in a  
word !

Know her !

*Guен.* Oh, Mildred, look to me, at least !  
Thorold—she's dead, I'd say, but that she  
stands

Rigid as stone and whiter !

*Tresh.* You have heard . . .

*Guen.* Too much ! you must proceed on further !

*Mil.* Yes—

Proceed—All's truth ! Go from me !

*Tresh.* All is truth,  
She tells you ! Well, you know, or ought  
to know,

All this I would forgive in her. I'd con  
Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take  
Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,  
I'd bind myself before them to exact  
The prescribed vengeance—and one word  
of hers,

The sight of her, the bare least memory  
Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride  
Above all prides, my all in all so long,  
Had scattered every trace of my resolve !

What were it silently to waste away  
And see her waste away from this day forth,  
Two scathed things with leisure to repent,  
And grow acquainted with the grave, and die,  
Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten ?  
It were not so impossible to bear !

But this—that, fresh from last night's pledge  
renewed

Of love with the successful gallant there,  
She'll calmly bid me help her to entice,  
Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth  
Who thinks her all that's chaste, and good,  
and pure,

—Invite me to betray him . . . who so fit  
As honour's self to cover shame's arch-deed?  
—That she'll receive Lord Mertoun—(her  
own phrase)—  
This, who could bear? Why, you have  
heard of thieves,  
Stabbers, the earth's disgrace—who yet have  
laughed,  
“Talk not of tortures to me—I'll betray  
“No comrade I've pledged faith to!”—you  
have heard  
“Of wretched women—all but Mildreds—  
tied  
By wild illicit ties to losels vile  
You'd tempt them to forsake; and they'll  
reply  
“Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I  
have  
“In him, why should I leave him then for  
gold,  
“Repute, or friends?”—and you have felt  
your heart  
Respond to such poor outcasts of the world  
As to so many friends; bad as you please,  
You've felt they were God's men and women  
still,  
So not to be disowned by you! but she,  
That stands there, calmly gives her lover up  
As means to wed the Earl that she may hide  
Their intercourse the surelier! and, for this,  
I curse her to her face before you all!

Shame hunt her from the earth ! Then  
Heaven do right  
To both ! It hears me now—shall judge  
her then !

[As MILDRED faints and falls, TRESHAM  
rushes out.]

Aus. Stay, Tresham, we'll accompany  
you !

Guen. We?

What, and leave Mildred ? We ? why,  
where's my place

But by her side, and where's yours but by  
mine ?

Mildred—one word—only look at me, then !

Aus. No, Guendolen ! I echo Thorold's  
voice !

She is unworthy to behold . . .

Guen. Us two ?

If you spoke on reflection, and if I  
Approved your speech—if you (to put the  
thing

At lowest) you, the soldier, bound to make  
The King's cause yours, and fight for it,  
and throw

Regard to others of its right or wrong,  
—If with a death-white woman you can help,  
Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,  
You left her—or if I, her cousin, friend  
This morning, playfellow but yesterday,  
Who've said, or thought at least a thousand  
times,

"I'd serve you if I could," should now face  
round  
And say, "Ah, that's to only signify  
"I'd serve you while you're fit to serve  
yourself—  
"So long as fifty eyes await the turn  
"Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed  
wish,  
"I'll proffer my assistance you'll not need—  
"When every tongue is praising you, I'll join  
"The praisers' chorus—when you're hemmed  
about  
"With lives between you and detraction—  
lives  
"To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,  
"Rough hand should violate the sacred ring  
"Their worship throws about you,—then  
indeed,  
"Who'll stand up for you stout as I?"  
If so  
We said and so we did,—not Mildred there  
Would be unworthy to behold us both,  
But we should be unworthy, both of us,  
To be beheld by—by—your meanest dog,  
Which, if that sword were broken in your  
face  
Before a crowd, that badge torn off your  
breast,  
And you cast out with hootings and contempt,  
—Would push his way thro' all the hooters,  
gain

Your side; go off with you and all your  
shame

To the next ditch you chose to die in !  
Austin,

Do you love me ? Here's Austin, Mildred,  
—here's

Your brother says he does not believe half—  
No, nor half that—of all he heard ! He says,  
Look up and take his hand !

*Aus.* Look up and take

My hand, dear Mildred !

*Mil.* I—I was so young !

Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I had  
No mother—God forgot me—so I fell !

*Guen.* Mildred !

*Mil.* Require no further ! Did I  
dream

That I could palliate what is done ? All's  
true.

Now, punish me ! A woman takes my hand !  
Let go my hand ! You do not know, I see—  
I thought that Thorold told you.

*Guen.* What is this ?

Where start you to ?

*Mil.* Oh Austin, loosen me !

You heard the whole of it—your eyes were  
worse,

In their surprise, than Thorold's ! Oh, unless  
You stay to execute his sentence, loose  
My hand ! Has Thorold gone, and are you  
here ?

*Guen.* Here, Mildred, we two friends  
of yours will wait  
Your bidding ; be you silent, sleep or muse !  
Only, when you shall want your bidding done,  
How can we do it if we are not by ?  
Here's Austin waiting patiently your will !  
One spirit to command, and one to love  
And to believe in it and do its best,  
Poor as that is, to help it—why, the world  
Has been won many a time, its length and  
breadth,  
By just such a beginning !

*Mil.* I believe  
If once I threw my arms about your neck  
And sunk my head upon your breast, that I  
Should weep again !

*Guen.* Let go her hand now, Austin.  
Wait for me.—Pace the gallery and think  
On the world's seemings and realities  
Until I call you. [AUSTIN goes.]

*Mil.* No—I cannot weep !  
No more tears from this brain—no sleep—  
no tears !

O Guendolen, I love you !

*Guen.* Yes : and “love”  
Is a short word that says so very much !  
It says that you confide in me.

*Mil.* Confide !  
*Guen.* Your lover's name, then ! I've so  
much to learn,  
Ere I can work in your behalf !

*Mil.* My friend,  
You know I cannot tell his name.

*Guen.* At least  
He *is* your lover? and you love him too?

*Mil.* Ah, do you ask me that?—but I am  
fallen  
So low!

*Guen.* You love him still, then?

*Mil.* My sole prop  
Against the guilt that crushes me! I say,  
Each night ere I lie down, "I was so  
young—

"I had no mother—and I loved him so!"  
And then God seems indulgent, and I dare  
Trust Him my soul in sleep.

*Guen.* How could you let us  
E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then?

*Mil.* There is a cloud around me.

*Guen.* But you said  
You would receive his suit in spite of this?

*Mil.* I say there is a cloud . . .

*Guen.* No cloud to me!  
Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!

*Mil.* What maddest fancy . . .

*Guen.* [Calling aloud.] Austin!  
(Spare your pains—

When I have got a truth, that truth I keep)—

*Mil.* By all you love, sweet Guendolen,  
forbear!

Have I confided in you . . .

*Guen.* Just for this!

Austin!—Oh, not to guess it at the first!  
 But I *did* guess it—that is, I divined—  
 Felt by an instinct how it was—why else  
 Should I pronounce you free from all that  
 heap

Of sins which had been irredeemable?  
 I felt they were not yours—what other way  
 Than this, not yours? The secret's wholly  
 mine!

*Mil.* If you would see me die before his  
 face . . .

*Guen.* I'd hold my peace! And if the  
 Earl returns  
 To-night?

*Mil.* Ah, Heaven, he's lost!

*Guen.* I thought so! Austin!

*Enter AUSTIN.*

Oh, where have you been hiding?

*Aus.* Thorold's gone,  
 I know not how, across the meadowland.  
 I watched him till I lost him in the skirts  
 Of the beech-wood.

*Guen.* Gone? All thwarts us!

*Mil.* Thorold too?

*Guen.* I have thought. First lead this  
 Mildred to her room.

Go on the other side: and then we'll seek  
 Your brother; and I'll tell you, by the way,  
 The greatest comfort in the world. You said  
 There was a clew to all. Remember, sweet,  
 He said there was a clew! I hold it. Come!

## ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under MILDRED's window. A light seen through a central red pane.*

*Enter TRESHAM through the trees.*

Again here ! But I cannot lose myself.  
The heath—the orchard—I have traversed  
glades  
And dells and bosky paths which used to  
lead  
Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering  
My boy's adventurous step ; and now they  
tend  
Hither or soon or late ; the blackest shade  
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees  
ope wide,  
And the dim turret I have fled from fronts  
Again my step ; the very river put  
Its arm about me and conducted me  
To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun  
Their will no longer—do your will with me !  
Oh, bitter ! To have reared a towering  
scheme  
Of happiness, and to behold it razed,  
Were nothing : all men hope, and see their  
hopes

Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew :  
But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours  
No horrid prodigy like this would spring,  
Were just as though I hoped that from  
these old

Confederates against the sovereign day,  
Children of older and yet older sires  
(Whose living coral berries dropped, as now  
On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,  
On many a beauty's wimple) would proceed  
No poison-tree, to thrust, from Hell its  
root,

Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.  
Why came I here? What must I do?—

[*A bell strikes.*]—A bell?

Midnight! and 'tis at midnight . . . Ah, I  
catch

—Woods, river, plains, I catch your  
meaning now

And I obey you! Hist! This tree will  
serve!

[*He retires behind one of the trees. After a  
pause, enter MERTOUN cloaked as before.*

*Mer.* Not time! Beat out thy last  
voluptuous beat

Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought  
the clock

In the chapel struck as I was pushing thro'  
The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise  
My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past!  
So much the more delicious task to see

Mildred revive: to pluck out, thorn by  
thorn,

All traces of the rough forbidden path  
My rash love lured her to! Each day  
must see

Some fear of hers effaced, some hope  
renewed!

Then there will be surprises, unforeseen  
Delights in store. I'll not regret the past!

*[The light is placed above in the purple  
pane.]*

And see, my signal rises! Mildred's star!  
I never saw it lovelier than now  
It rises for the last time! If it sets,  
'Tis that the re-assuring sun may dawn!

*[As he prepares to ascend the last tree of  
the avenue, TRESHAM arrests his arm.]*

Unhand me—peasant, by your grasp! Here's  
gold.

"Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I'd pluck  
A branch from the white-blossomed shrub  
beneath

The casement there! Take this, and hold  
your peace.

*Tresh.* Into the moonlight yonder, come  
with me!

—Out of the shadow!

*Mer.* I am armed, fool!

*Tresh.* Yes,

Or no?—You'll come into the light, or no?

My hand is on your throat—refuse!—

*Mer.*

That voice !

Where have I heard . . . no—that was  
mild and slow.

I'll come with you ! [They advance.]

*Tresh.*

You're armed—that's well.

Your name—who are you ?

*Mer.*

(Tresham !—she is lost !)

*Tresh.* Oh, silent ? Do you know, you  
bear yourself

Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had  
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look  
When they're detected, still your kind has  
looked !

The bravo holds an assured countenance,  
The thief is voluble and plausible,  
But silently the slave of lust has crouched  
When I have fancied it before a man !

Your name ?

*Mer.* I do conjure Lord Tresham—ay,  
Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—  
That he for his own sake forbear to ask  
My name ! As Heaven's above, his future  
weal

Or woe depends upon my silence ! Vain !  
I read your white inexorable face !  
Know me, Lord Tresham ! [He throws off  
his disguises.]

*Tresh.*

Mertoun !

[After a pause.]

Draw now !

*Mer.*

Hear me

But speak first !

*Tresh.* Not one least word on your life !

Be sure that I will strangle in your throat  
The least word that informs me how you live

And yet seem what you seem ! No doubt  
'twas you

Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin !

We should join hands in frantic sympathy  
If you once taught me the unteachable,  
Explained how you can live so, and so lie !  
With God's help I retain, despite my sense,  
The old belief—a life like yours is still  
Impossible ! Now draw !

*Mer.* Not for my sake,  
Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,  
And most, for her sake !

*Tresh.* Ha, ha, what should I  
Know of your ways ? A miscreant like  
yourself,  
How must one rouse his ire ?—A blow ?—  
that's pride  
No doubt, to him ! one spurns him, does  
one not ?  
Or sets the foot upon his mouth—or spits  
Into his face ! Come—which, or all of  
these ?

*Mer.* 'Twixt him, and me, and Mildred,  
Heaven be judge !  
Can I avoid this ? Have your will, my Lord !

[*He draws, and, after a few passes, falls.*

*Tresh.* You are not hurt?

*Mer.* You'll hear me now!

*Tresh.* But rise!

*Mer.* Ah, Tresham, say I not "you'll  
hear me now!"

And what procures a man the right to speak  
In his defence before his fellow-man,  
But—I suppose—the thought that presently  
He may have leave to speak before his God  
His whole defence?

*Tresh.* Not hurt? It cannot be!  
You made no effort to resist me. Where  
Did my sword reach you? Why not have  
returned  
My thrusts? Hurt where?

*Mer.* My lord—

*Tresh.* How young he is!

*Mer.* Lord Tresham, I am very young,  
and yet

I have entangled other lives with mine.  
Do let me speak—and do believe my speech,  
That when I die before you presently,—

*Tresh.* Can you stay here till I return  
with help?

*Mer.* Oh, stay by me! When I was  
less than boy

I did you grievous wrong, and knew it  
not—

Upon my honour, knew it not! Once known,  
I could not find what seemed a better way

To right you than I took : my life—you feel  
 How less than nothing had been giving you  
 The life you've taken? But I thought my  
 way

The better—only for your sake and hers.  
 And as you have decided otherwise,  
 Would I had an infinity of lives  
 To offer you! — now say—instruct me —  
 think!

Can you from out the minutes I have left  
 Eke out my reparation? Oh—think—think!  
 For I must wring a partial—dare I say,  
 Forgiveness from you, ere I die?

*Tresh.* I do  
 Forgive you.

*Mer.* Wait and ponder that great  
 word!

Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope  
 To speak to you of—Mildred!

*Tresh.* Mertoun,—haste  
 And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you  
 Should tell me for a novelty you're young—  
 Thoughtless—unable to recall the past!  
 Be but your pardon ample as my own!

*Mer.* Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke  
 and a drop  
 Of blood or two, should bring all this about!  
 Why, 'twas my very fear of you—my love  
 Of you—(what passion's like a boy's for one  
 Like you?)—that ruined me! I dreamed of  
 you—

You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,  
 The scholar and the gentleman. I burned  
 To knit myself to you—but I was young,  
 And your surpassing reputation kept me  
 So far aloof—oh, wherefore all that love?  
 With less of love, my glorious yesterday  
 Of praise and gentle words and kindest  
 looks,

Had taken place perchance six months ago !  
 Even now—how happy we had been ! And  
 yet

I know the thought of this escaped you,  
 Tresham !

Let me look up into your face—I feel  
 'Tis changed above me—yet my eyes are  
 glazed.

Where? where?

*[As he endeavours to raise himself, his eye  
 catches the lamp.]*

Ah, Mildred ! What will Mildred do ?  
 Tresham, her life is bound up in the life  
 That's bleeding fast away !—I'll live—must  
 live,

There ! if you'll only turn me I shall live  
 And save her ! Tresham—oh, had you but  
 heard !

Had you but heard ! What right have you  
 to set

The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,  
 And then say, as we perish, "Had I  
 thought,

"All had gone otherwise." We've sinned  
and die:

Never you sin, Lord Tresham!—for you'll  
die,  
And God will judge you.

*Tresh.* Yes, be satisfied—  
That process is begun.

*Mer.* And she sits there  
Waiting for me. Now, say you this to her—  
You—not another—say, I saw him die  
As he breathed this—"I love her"—(you  
don't know  
What those three small words mean) say,  
loving her

Lowers me down the bloody slope to death  
With memories . . . I speak to her—not  
you,

Who had no pity—will have no remorse,  
Perchance intend her . . . Die along with  
me,

Dear Mildred!—'tis so easy—and you'll 'scape  
So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,  
Wth rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds  
Done to you—heartless men to have my  
heart,

And I tied down with grave-clothes and the  
worm,

Aware, perhaps, of every blow—Oh God!—  
Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear  
The felon stripe by stripe? Die, Mildred!

Leave

Their honourable world to them—for God  
We're good enough, tho' the world casts us  
out!

[*A whistle is heard.*

*Tresh.* Ho, Gerard!

*Enter GERARD, AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN,*  
*with lights.*

No one speak! you see what's done!  
I cannot bear another voice!

*Mer.* There's light—  
Light all about me and I move to it.  
Tresham, did I not tell you—did you not  
Just promise to deliver words of mine  
To Mildred?

*Tresh.* I will bear those words to her.

*Mer.* Now?

*Tresh.* Now! Lift you the body, Gerard,  
and leave me  
The head.

[*As they have half raised MERTOUN, he turns suddenly.*

*Mer.* I knew they turned me—turn me  
not from her!

There! stay you! there! [Dies.]

*Guen.* [After a pause.] Austin, remain you  
here

With Thorold until Gerard comes with help—  
Then lead him to his chamber. I must go  
To Mildred.

*Tresh.* Guendolen, I hear each word

You utter—did you hear him bid me give  
 His message? Did you hear my promise? I,  
 And only I, see Mildred!

*Guen.* She will die.

*Tresh.* Oh no, she will not die! I dare  
 not hope

She'll die. What ground have you to think  
 she'll die?

Why, Austin's with you!

*Aus.* Had we but arrived  
 Before you fought!

*Tresh.* There was no fight at all!  
 He let me slaughter him—the boy!—I'll  
 trust

The body there to you and Gerard—thus!  
 Now bear him on before me.

*Aus.* Whither bear him?

*Tresh.* Oh, to my chamber. When we  
 meet there next,

We shall be friends.

[*They bear out the body of MERTOUN.*

Will she die, Guendolen?

*Guen.* Where are you taking me?

*Tresh.* He fell just here!

Now answer me. Shall you in your whole  
 life

—You who have nought to do with  
 Mertoun's fate,

Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,  
 Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?

When you and Austin wander arm in arm

Thro' our ancestral grounds, will not a shade  
Be ever on the meadow and the waste—  
Another kind of shade than when the night  
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up !

But will you ever so forget his breast  
As willingly to cross this bloody turf  
Under the black yew avenue ? That's well !  
You turn your head ! and *I* then ?—

*Guen.*                                   What is done  
Is done ! My care is for the living.

*Thorold,*  
Bear up against this burthen—more remains  
To set the neck to !

*Tresh.*                                   Dear and ancient trees  
My fathers planted, and I loved so well !  
What have I done that, like some fabled  
    crime

Of yore, lets loose a fury leading thus  
Her miserable dance amidst you all ?  
Oh, never more for me shall winds intone  
With all your tops a vast antiphony,  
Demanding and responding in God's praise !  
Hers ye are now — not mine ! Farewell  
—Farewell !

SCENE II.—MILDRED'S *Chamber.* MILDRED  
*alone.*

He comes not ! I have heard of those who  
seemed

Resourceless in prosperity,—you thought  
Sorrow might slay them when she listed—  
yet

Did they so gather up their diffused strength  
At her first menace, but they bade her strike,  
And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to  
scorn.

Oh, 'tis not so with me ! the first woe fell,  
And the rest fall upon it, not on me :  
Else should I bear that Henry comes not ?—  
fails

Just this first night out of so many nights ?  
Loving is done with ! Were he sitting  
now,

As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd  
love

No more—contrive no thousand happy ways  
To hide love from the loveless, any more !

I think I might have urged some little point  
In my defence, to Thorold ; he was breath-  
less

For the least hint of a defence ; but no !  
The first shame over, all that would might  
fall.

No Henry ! Yet I merely sit and think

The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have  
crept

Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost  
Her lover—oh, I dare not look upon  
Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'Tis she,  
Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The  
world

Forsakes me—only Henry's left me—left?  
When I have lost him, for he does not  
come,

And I sit stupidly. . . . Oh Heaven,  
break up

This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,  
By any means or any messenger!

*Tresh. [Without.]*                           Mildred!

*Mil. Come in! Heaven hears me!*

[*TRESHAM enters.*]                           You? alone?

Oh, no more cursing!

*Tresh.*                                   Mildred, I must sit.

There—you sit!

*Mil. Say it, Thorold—do not look  
The curse—deliver all you come to say!  
What must become of me? Oh speak that  
thought*

Which makes your brow and cheek so pale!

*Tresh. My thought?*

*Mil. All of it!*

*Tresh. How we waded—years ago—  
After those water-lilies, till the splash,  
I know not how, surprised us; and you  
dared*

Neither advance nor turn back, so we stood  
 Laughing and crying until Gerard came—  
 Once safe upon the turf, the loudest, too,  
 For once more reaching the relinquished  
 prize !

How idle thoughts are—some men's—dying  
 men's !

Mildred,—

*Mil.* You call me kindlier by my name  
 Than even yesterday—what is in that ?

*Tresh.* It weighs so much upon my mind  
 that I

This morning took an office not my own !  
 I might . . . of course, I must be glad or  
 grieved,  
 Content or not, at every little thing  
 That touches you—I may with a wrung  
 heart

Even reprove you, Mildred ; I did more—  
 Will you forgive me ?

*Mil.* Thorold? do you mock? . . .  
 Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that  
 word !

*Tresh.* Forgive me, Mildred !—are you  
 silent, sweet?

*Mil.* [Starting up.] Why does not Henry  
 Mertoun come to-night?

Are you, too, silent?

[Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing  
 to his scabbard, which is empty.]

Ah, this speaks for you !

You've murdered Henry Mertoun! now  
proceed!

What is it I must pardon? This and all?

Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.

Thorold, how very wretched you must be!

*Tresh.* He bade me tell you. . . .

*Mil.* What I do forbid

Your utterance of! so much that you may  
tell

And will not—how you murdered him . . .  
but, no!

You'll tell me that he loved me, never more  
Than bleeding out his life there—must I say  
“Indeed” to that? Enough! I pardon you!

*Tresh.* You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh  
words, yes:

Of this last deed Another's Judge—whose  
doom

I wait in doubt, despondency, and fear.

*Mil.* Oh true! there's nought for me to  
pardon! True!

You loosed my soul of all its cares at once—  
Death makes me sure of him for ever! You  
Tell me his last words? *He* shall tell me  
them,

And take my answer—not in words, but  
reading

Himself the heart I had to read him late,  
Which death . . .

*Tresh.* Death? you are dying too?  
Well said

Of Guendolen ! I dared not hope you'd  
die—

But she was sure of it.

*Mil.* Tell Guendolen I loved  
her, and tell Austin . . .

*Tresh.* . . . Him you loved—

And me ?

*Mil.* Ah, Thorold ! was't not rashly  
done

To quench that blood, on fire with youth  
and hope

And love of me, whom you loved too, and  
yet

Suffered to sit here waiting his approach  
While you were slaying him ? Oh, doubt-  
lessly

You let him speak his poor confused boy's-  
speech

—Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath  
And respite me !—you let him try to give  
The story of our loves, and ignorance,  
And the brief madness, and the long despair—  
You let him plead all this, because your code  
Of honour bids you hear before you strike :  
But at the end, as he looked up for life  
Into your eyes—you struck him down !

*Tresh.* No ! no !

Had I but heard him—had I let him speak  
Half the truth—less—had I looked long on  
him,

I had desisted ! Why, as he lay there,

The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all  
The story ere he told it ! I saw thro'  
The troubled surface of his crime and yours  
A depth of purity immovable !  
Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest,  
Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath !  
I would not glance—my punishment's at hand.  
There, Mildred, is the truth ! and you—  
say on—

You curse me ?

*Mil.* As I dare approach that Heaven  
Which has not bade a living thing despair,  
Which needs no code to keep its grace from  
stain,

But bids the vilest worm that turns on it  
Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not,  
But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of  
souls ! [Falls on his neck.]

There ! do not think too much upon the past !  
The cloud that's broke was all the same a  
cloud

While it stood up between my friend and  
you !

You hurt him 'neath its shadow—but is that  
So past retrieve ? I have his heart, you  
know—

I may dispose of it—I give it you !

It loves you as mine loves ! Confirm me,  
Henry ! [Dies.]

*Tresh.* I wish thee joy, beloved ! I am glad  
In thy full gladness !

*Guen.* [Without.] Mildred ! Tresham !  
[Entering with AUSTIN.] Thorold, I could  
desist no longer. Ah, she swoons !

That's well—

*Tresh.* Oh ! better far than that !

*Guen.* She's dead !

Let me unlock her arms !

*Tresh.* She threw them thus  
About my neck, and blessed me, and then died.  
—You'll let them stay now, Guendolen !

*Aus.* Leave her  
And look to him ! What ails you, Thorold ?

*Guen.* White  
As she—and whiter ! Austin—quick—this  
side !

*Aus.* A froth is oozing thro' his clenched  
teeth—

Both lips, where they're not bitten thro',  
are black !

Speak, dearest Thorold !

*Tresh.* Something does weigh down  
My neck beside her weight: thanks: I should  
fall

But for you, Austin, I believe !—there, there—  
'Twill pass away soon !—ah,—I had for-  
gotten—

I am dying.

*Guen.* Thorold—Thorold—why was this ?

*Tresh.* I said, just as I drank the poison  
off,

The earth would be no longer earth to me,

The life out of all life was gone from me!  
 There are blind ways provided, the foredone  
 Heart-weary player in this pageant-world  
 Drops out by, letting the main masque defile  
 By the conspicuous portal :—I am through—  
 Just through :—

*Guen.* Don't leave him, Austin ! death  
 is close.

*Tresh.* Already Mildred's face is peace-  
 fuller !

I see you, Austin—feel you—here's my hand,  
 Put yours in it—You, Guendolen, yours too !  
 You're Lord and Lady now — You're  
 Treshams—Name

And fame are yours — You hold our  
 'Scutcheon up.

Austin, no Blot on it ! You see how blood  
 Must wash one blot away : the first blot  
 came

And the first blood came. To the vain  
 world's eye

All's gules again—no care to the vain world,  
 From whence the red was drawn !

*Aus.* No blot shall come !

*Tresh.* I said that—yet it did come.  
 Should it come,

Vengeance is God's not man's. Remember  
 me !

[Dies.]

*Guen.* [Letting fall the pulseless arm.]  
 Ah, Thorold, we can but—remember  
 you !

## IN A GONDOLA.

*He sings.*

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart  
In this my singing !  
For the stars help me, and the sea bears  
part ;  
The very night is clinging  
Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space  
Above me, whence thy face  
May light my joyous heart to thee its  
dwelling-place.

*She speaks.*

Say after me, and try to say  
My very words, as if each word  
Came from you-of your own accord,  
In your own voice, in your own way :  
“ This woman's heart, and soul, and brain  
“ Are mine as much as this gold chain  
“ She bids me wear ; which ” (say again)  
“ I choose to make by cherishing  
“ A precious thing, or choose to fling  
“ Over the boat-side, ring by ring.”  
And yet once more say . . . no word more !  
Since words are only words. Give o'er !  
Unless you call me, all the same,  
Familiarly by my pet-name

Which, if the Three should hear you call,  
 And me reply to, would proclaim  
 At once our secret to them all :  
 Ask of me, too, command me, blame—  
 Do break down the partition-wall  
 'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds  
 Curtained in dusk and splendid folds.  
 What's left but—all of me to take ?  
 I am the Three's ; prevent them, slake  
 Your thirst ! 'Tis said, the Arab sage  
 In practising with gems can loose  
 Their subtle spirit in his cruce  
 And leave but ashes : so, sweet mage,  
 Leave them my ashes when thy use  
 Sucks out my soul, thy heritage !

*He sings.*

I.

Past we glide, and past, and past !  
 What's that poor Agnese doing  
 Where they make the shutters fast ?  
 Gray Zanobi's just a-wooing  
 To his couch the purchased bride :  
 Past we glide !

II.

Past we glide, and past, and past !  
 Why's the Pucci Palace flaring  
 Like a beacon to the blast ?  
 Guests by hundreds—not one caring

If the dear host's neck were wried :  
Past we glide !

*She sings.*

I.

The Moth's kiss, first !  
Kiss me as if you made believe  
You were not sure, this eve,  
How my face, your flower, had pursed  
Its petals up ; so, here and there  
You brush it, till I grow aware  
Who wants me, and wide open burst.

II.

The Bee's kiss, now !  
Kiss me as if you entered gay  
My heart at some noonday,  
A bud that dares not disallow  
The claim, so all is rendered up,  
And passively its shattered cup  
Over your head to sleep I bow.

*He sings.*

III

What are we two ?  
I am a Jew,  
And carry thee, farther than friends can  
pursue.

To a feast of our tribe,  
Where they need thee to bribe  
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe  
Thy . . . Shatter the vision for ever ! And  
now,  
As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou !

## II.

Say again, what we are ?  
The sprite of a star,  
I lure thee above where the Destinies bar  
My plumes their full play  
Till a ruddier ray  
Than my pale one announce there is wither-  
ing away  
Some . . . Shatter the vision for ever ! And  
now,  
As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou !

*He muses.*

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest ?  
The land's lap or the water's breast ?  
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,  
Or swim in lucid shallows, just  
Eluding water-lily leaves,  
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust  
To lock you, whom release he must ;  
Which life were best on Summer eves ?

*He speaks, musing.*

Lie back; could thought of mine improve  
you?

From this shoulder let there spring  
A wing; from this, another wing;  
Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you!  
Snow-white must they spring, to blend  
With your flesh, but I intend  
They shall deepen to the end,  
Broader, into burning gold,  
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold  
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet  
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet  
As if a million sword-blades hurled  
Defiance from you to the world!  
Rescue me thou, the only real!  
And scare away this mad Ideal  
That came, nor notions to depart!  
Thanks! Now, stay ever as thou art!

*Still he muses.*

I.

What if the Three should catch at last  
Thy serenader? While there's cast  
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast  
Gian pinions me, Himself has past  
His stylet thro' my back; I reel;  
And . . . is it Thou I feel?

## II.

They trail me, these three godless knaves,  
 Past every church that sains and saves,  
 Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves  
 By Lido's wet accursed graves,  
 They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,  
 And . . . on Thy breast I sink !

*She replies, musing.*

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,  
 As I do : thus : were Death so unlike Sleep,  
 Caught this way ? Death's to fear from  
 flame, or steel,  
 Or poison doubtless ; but from water—feel !

Go find the bottom ! Would you stay me ?  
 There !

Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass  
 To plait in where the foolish jewel was,  
 I flung away : since you have praised my  
 hair,  
 'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

*He speaks.*

Row home ? must we row home ? Too surely  
 Know I where its front's demurely  
 Over the Giudecca piled ;  
 Window just with window mating,  
 Door on door exactly waiting,  
 All's the set face of a child :

But behind it, where's a trace  
Of the staidness and reserve,  
And formal lines without a curve,  
In the same child's playing-face?  
No two windows look one way  
O'er the small sea-water thread  
Below them. Ah, the autumn day  
I, passing, saw you overhead!  
First, out a cloud of curtain b'lew.  
Then, a sweet cry, and last, cam'e you—  
To catch your loory that must needs  
Escape just then, of all times then,  
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,  
And make me happiest of men.  
I scarce could breathe to see you reach  
So far back o'er the balcony  
(To catch him ere he climbed too high  
Above you in the Smyrna peach)  
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,  
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,  
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake  
The Roman girls were wont, of old,  
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake  
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.  
Dear loory, may his beak retain  
Ever its delicate rose stain  
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms  
Had marked their thief to know again!  
Stay longer yet, for others' sake  
Than mine! what should your chamber do?  
—With all its rarities that ache

In silence while day lasts, but wake  
At night-time and their life renew,  
Suspended just to pleasure you  
—That brought against their will together  
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave  
Around them such a magic tether  
That they look dumb : your harp, believe,  
With all the sensitive tight strings  
That dare not speak, now to itself  
Breathes slumbrously as if some elf  
Went in and out the chords, his wings  
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,  
As an angel may, between the maze  
Of midnight palace-pillars, on  
And on, to sow God's plagues have gone  
Through guilty glorious Babylon.  
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph  
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell,  
As the dry limpet for the lymph  
Come with a tune he knows so well.  
And how your statues' hearts must swell !  
And how your pictures must descend  
To see each other, friend with friend !  
Oh, could you take them by surprise,  
You'd find Schidone's eager Duke  
Doing the quaintest courtesies  
To that prim Saint by Haste-thee-Luke :  
And, deeper into her rock den,  
Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen  
You'd find retreated from the ken  
Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—

As if the Tizian thinks of her,  
 And is not, rather, gravely bent  
 On seeing for himself what toys  
 Are these, his progeny invent,  
 What litter now the board employs  
 Whereon he signed a document  
 That got him murdered ! Each enjoys  
 Its night so well, you cannot break  
 The sport up, so, indeed must make  
 More stay with me, for others' sake

*She speaks.*

I.

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,  
 Is used to tie the jasmine back  
 That overflows my room with sweets,  
 Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets  
 My Zanze : if the ribbon's black,  
 The Three are watching ; keep away.

II.

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreath  
 A mesh of water-weeds about  
 Its prow, as if he unaware  
 Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair ;  
 That I may throw a paper out  
 As you and he go underneath.

There's Zanze's vigilant taper ; safe are we !  
Only one minute more to-night with me ?  
Resume your past self of a month ago !  
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be  
The lady with the colder breast than snow :  
Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my  
hand  
More than I touch yours when I step to land,  
And say, All thanks, Siora !—

Heart to heart,  
And lips to lips ! Yet once more, ere we  
part,  
Clasp me, and make me thine, as mine  
thou art !

*He is surprised, and stabbed.*

It was ordained to be so, Sweet,—and best  
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, and on thy  
breast.  
Still kiss me ! Care not for the cowards !  
Care  
Only to put aside thy beauteous hair  
My blood will hurt ! The Three, I do not  
scorn  
To death, because they never lived : but I  
Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more  
kiss)—can die !

## CRISTINA.

## I.

SHE should never have looked at me,  
 If she meant I should not love her !  
 There are plenty . . . men, you call such,  
 I suppose . . . she may discover  
 All her soul to, if she pleases,  
 And yet leave much as she found them .  
 But I'm not so, and she knew it  
 When she fixed me, glancing round them.

## II.

What ? To fix me thus meant nothing ?  
 But I can't tell . . . there's my weakness . . .  
 What her look said !—no vile cant, sure,  
 About "need to strew the bleakness  
 "Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,  
 "That the Sea feels"—no "strange  
 yearning  
 "That such souls have, most to lavish  
 "Where there's chance of least returning."

## III.

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows !  
 But not quite so sunk that moments,  
 Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,  
 When the spirit's true endowments

Stand out plainly from its false ones,  
And apprise it if pursuing  
Or the right way or the wrong way,  
To its triumph or undoing.

## IV.

There are flashes struck from midnights,  
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,  
Whereby piled-up honours perish,  
Whereby swoln ambitions dwindle,  
While just this or that poor impulse,  
Which for once had play unstifled,  
Seems the sole work of a life-time  
That away the rest have trifled.

## V.

Doubt you it, in some such moment,  
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,  
Ages past the soul existed,  
Here an age 'tis resting merely,  
And hence, fleets again for ages :  
While the true end, sole and single.  
It stops here for is, this love-way,  
With some other soul to mingle ?

## VI.

Else it loses what it lived for,  
And eternally must lose it ;  
Better ends may be in prospect,  
Deeper blisses, if you choose it,

But this life's end and this love-bliss  
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether  
This she felt, as, looking at me,  
Mine and her souls rushed together?

## VII.

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,  
The world's honours, in derision,  
Trampled out the light for ever:  
Never fear but there's provision  
Of the Devil's to quench knowledge  
Lest we walk the earth in rapture!  
—Making those who catch God's secret  
Just so much more prize their capture.

## VIII.

Such am I: the secret's mine now!  
She has lost me—I have gained her  
Her soul's mine: and, thus, grown perfect,  
I shall pass my life's remainder,  
Life will just hold out the proving  
Both our powers, alone and blended—  
And then, come the next life quickly!  
This world's use will have been ended.

## PICTOR IGNOTUS.

[FLORENCE, 15—.]

I could have painted pictures like that  
youth's  
Ye praise so. How my soul springs up !  
No bar  
Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while  
it soothes !—  
Never did fate forbid me, star by star,  
To outburst on your night with all my gift  
Of fires from God : nor would my flesh  
have shrunk  
From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift  
And wide to Heaven, or, straight like  
thunder, sunk  
To the centre, of an instant ; or around  
Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan  
The license and the limit, space and bound,  
Allowed to Truth made visible in Man.  
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,  
Over the canvass could my hand have flung,  
Each face obedient to its passion's law,  
Each passion clear proclaimed without a  
tongue ;  
Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,  
A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,

Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her  
brood  
Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its  
place,  
Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,  
And locked the mouth fast, like a castle  
braved,—  
O Human faces, hath it spilt, my cup?  
What did ye give me that I have not saved?  
Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!)  
Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,  
As, making new hearts beat and bosoms  
swell,  
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South or  
North,  
Bound for the calmly satisfied great State,  
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,  
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the  
freight,  
Through old streets named afresh from its  
event,  
Till it reached home, where learned Age  
should greet  
My face, and Youth, the star not yet  
distinct  
Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!—  
Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked  
With love about, and praise, till life should  
end,  
And then not go to Heaven, but linger  
here,

Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,—

The thought grew frightful, 'twas so wildly dear!

But a voice changed it! Glimpses of such sights

Have scared me, like the revels thro' a door

Of some strange House of Idols at its rites;  
This world seemed not the world it was before!

Mixed with my loving trusting ones there trooped

. . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun

To press on me and judge me? Tho' I stooped

Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,  
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . . enough!

These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,

Count them for garniture and household stuff,  
And where they live our pictures needs must live.

And see their faces, listen to their prate,  
Partakers of their daily pettiness,  
Discussed of,—“This I love, or this I hate,

“This likes me more, and this affects me less!”

Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles  
My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint  
These endless cloisters and eternal aisles  
With the same series, Virgin, Babe, and  
Saint,  
With the same cold, calm, beautiful regard,  
At least no merchant traffics in my heart;  
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward  
Vain tongues from where my pictures  
stand apart;  
Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine  
While, blackening in the daily candle-  
smoke,  
They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,  
'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.  
So die, my pictures; surely, gently die!  
Oh, youth, men praise so,—holds their  
praise its worth?  
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden  
cry?  
Tastes sweet the water with such specks  
of earth?

## THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY.

## A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE.

(*In the original*) ROSA MUNDI; SEU, FULCITE  
ME FLORIBUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER  
GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT  
JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CAN-  
TUQUE, *Virgilius*. AND HATH OFTEN  
BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE AND FESTI-  
VALS. GAVISUS ERAM, *Jessides*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the  
burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at  
Paris, A.D. 1314; as distorted by the re-  
fraction from Flemish brain to brain, during  
the course of a couple of centuries.—R. B.)

## I.

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAEI  
THE Lord, we look to once for all,  
Is the Lord we should look at, all at once :  
He knows not to vary, saith St. Paul,  
Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.  
See Him no other than as he is ;  
Give both the Infinites their due—  
Infinite mercy, but, I wis,  
As infinite a justice too.  
[Organ: *plagal cadence*.  
As infinite a justice too.]

## II.

## ONE SINGETH.

John, Master of the Temple of God,  
 Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,  
 What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,  
 He sold it to Sultan Saladin—  
 Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,  
 Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,  
 And clipt of his wings in Paris square,  
 They bring him now to be burned alive.

*[And wanteth there grace of lute or  
 clavicithern, ye shall say to confirm  
 him who singeth—]*

We bring John now to be burned alive.

## III.

In the midst is a goodly gallows built ;  
 'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck ;  
 But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,  
 Make a trench all round with the city  
 muck ;  
 Inside they pile log upon log, good store ;  
 Faggots not few, blocks great and small,  
 Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more,—  
 For they mean he should roast in the sight  
 of all.

## CHORUS.

We mean he should roast in the sight  
 of all.

## IV.

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith ;  
 Billets that blaze substantial and slow ;  
 Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith ;  
 Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white  
     glow :  
 Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,  
 Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,  
 Spit in his face, then leap back safe,  
 Sing “ Laudes ” and bid clap-to the torch.

## CHORUS.

*Laus Deo*—who bids clap-to the torch.

## V.

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,  
 Is burning alive in Paris square !  
 How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged ?  
 Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there ?  
 Or heave his chest, while a band goes round ?  
 Or threat with his fist, since his arms are  
     spliced ?  
 Or kick with his feet, now his legs are  
     bound ?  
 —Thinks John—I will call upon Jesus  
     Christ.                  [Here one crosseth himself.]

## VI.

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,  
 Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk ;

To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.

(*Salva reverentia.*)

Now it was, "Saviour, bountiful lamb,  
I have roasted thee Turks, though men  
roast me.

See thy servant, the plight wherein I am !  
Art thou a Saviour ? Save thou me ! "

#### CHORUS.

'Tis John the mocker cries, Save thou me !

#### VII.

Who maketh God's menace an idle word ?

—Saith, it no more means what it pro-  
claims,

Than a damsel's threat to her wanton bird ?—  
For she too prattles of ugly names.

—Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—what  
he knows ;

That God is good and the rest is breath ;  
Why else is the same styled, Sharon's rose ?

Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

#### CHORUS.

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith !

#### VIII.

Alack, there be roses and roses, John !

Some, honied of taste like your leman's  
tongue :

Some, bitter—for why? (roast gaily on!)

Their tree struck root in devil's dung!

When Paul once reasoned of righteousness

And of temperance and of judgment to come,

Good Felix trembled, he could no less—

John, snickering, crook'd his wicked thumb?

CHORUS.

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb?

IX.

Ha ha, John plucks now at his rose

To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!

Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays unclose;

Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;

And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;

And a gust of sulphur is all its smell

And lo, he is horribly in the toils

Of a coal-black giant flower of Hell!

CHORUS.

What maketh Heaven, that maketh Hell.

X.

So, as John called now, through the fire amain,

On the Name, he had cursed with, all his life—

To the Person, he bought and sold again—

For the Face, with his daily buffets rife—  
Feature by feature It took its place !

And his voice like a mad dog's choking  
bark

At the steady Whole of the Judge's Face—

Died. Forth John's soul flared into the  
dark.

#### SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

God help all poor souls lost in the dark.

#### AN EPISTLE.

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERI-  
ENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN.

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,  
The not-incurious in God's handiwork  
(This man's-flesh He hath admirably made,  
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,  
To coop up and keep down on earth a space  
That puff of vapour from His mouth, man's  
soul)

—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,  
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,  
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks  
Befall the flesh through too much stress and  
strain,

Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip  
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—  
And aptest in contrivance, under God,  
To baffle it by deftly stopping such :—  
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home  
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame  
with peace)  
Three samples of true snake-stone—rarer  
still,  
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,  
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than  
drugs)  
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho,  
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art  
Shall count a little labour unrepaid?  
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone  
On many a flinty furlong of this land.  
Also the country-side is all on fire  
With rumours of a marching hitherward—  
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.  
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted  
ear;  
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:  
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.  
Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten  
me,  
And once a town declared me for a spy,  
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,  
Since this poor covert where I pass the night,

This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence  
A man with plague-sores at the third degree  
Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laugh-  
est here!

'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,  
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip  
And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.  
A viscid choler is observable  
In tertians, I was nearly bold to say,  
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure  
Than our school wots of: there's a spider here  
Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of  
tombs,  
Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-gray back;  
Take five and drop them . . . but who  
knows his mind,  
The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to?  
His service payeth me a sublime  
Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.  
Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn,  
There set in order my experiences,  
Gather what most deserves and give thee all—  
Or I might add, Judea's gum-tragacanth  
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-  
grained,  
Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,  
In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease  
Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—  
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at  
Zoar—  
But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay : my Syrian blinketh gratefully,  
 Protesteth his devotion is my price—  
 Suppose I write what harms not, though he  
 steal ?

I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,  
 What set me off a-writing first of all.  
 An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang !  
 For, be it this town's barrenness—or else  
 The Man had something in the look of him—  
 His case has struck me far more than 'tis  
 worth.

So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose  
 In the great press of novelty at hand  
 The care and pains this somehow stole from  
 me)

I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,  
 Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the  
 truth ?

The very man is gone from me but now,  
 Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.  
 Thus then, and let thy better wit help all.

'Tis but a case of mania—subinduced  
 By epilepsy, at the turning-point  
 Of trance prolonged unduly some three days,  
 When by the exhibition of some drug  
 Or spell, exorcisation, stroke of art  
 Unknown to me and which 'twere well to  
 know,  
 The evil thing out-breaking all at once  
 Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—

But, flinging, so to speak, life's gates too wide,

Making a clear house of it too suddenly,  
The first conceit that entered pleased to write

Whatever it was minded on the wall  
So plainly at that vantage, as it were,  
(First come, first served) that nothing subsequent

Attaineth to erase the fancy-scrawls  
Which the returned and new-established soul  
Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart  
That henceforth she will read or these or none.

And first—the man's own firm conviction  
rests

That he was dead (in fact they buried him)  
—That he was dead and then restored to life  
By a Nazarene physician of his tribe:  
—'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he did rise.

"Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.  
Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume,  
Instead of giving way to time and health,  
Should eat itself into the life of life,  
As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all!

For see, how he takes up the after-life.  
The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,  
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,  
The body's habit wholly laudable,

As much, indeed, beyond the common health  
As he were made and put aside to shew.  
Think, could we penetrate by any drug  
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,  
And bring it clear and fair, by three days'  
sleep !

Whence has the man the balm that brightens  
all ?

This grown man eyes the world now like a  
child.

Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,  
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,  
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,  
Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the  
case,—

He listened not except I spoke to him,  
But folded his two hands and let them talk,  
Watching the flies that buzzed : and yet no  
fool.

And that's a sample how his years must go.  
Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,  
Should find a treasure, can he use the same  
With straightened habits and with tastes  
starved small,

And take at once to his impoverished brain  
The sudden element that changes things,  
—That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his  
hand,

And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust ?  
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—  
Warily parsimonious, when's no need,

Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times ?  
All prudent counsel as to what befits  
The golden mean, is lost on such an one.  
The man's fantastic will is the man's law.  
So here—we'll call the treasure knowledge,  
    say—

Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—  
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,  
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing  
    Heaven.

The man is witless of the size, the sum,  
The value in proportion of all things,  
Or whether it be little or be much.  
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments  
Assembled to besiege his city now,  
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—  
'Tis one ! Then take it on the other side,  
Speak of some trifling fact—he will gaze  
    rapt

With stupor at its very littleness—  
(Far as I see) as if in that indeed  
He caught prodigious import, whole results ;  
And so will turn to us the bystanders  
In ever the same stupor (note this point)  
That we too see not with his opened eyes !  
Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,  
Preposterously, at cross purposes.  
Should his child sicken unto death,—why,  
    look  
For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,  
Or pretermission of his daily craft—

While a word, gesture, glance, from that same child,  
At play or in the school or laid asleep,  
Will start him to an agony of fear,  
Exasperation, just as like ! demand  
The reason why—“ ‘tis but a word,” object—  
“ A gesture ”—he regards thee as our lord  
Who lived there in the pyramid alone,  
Looked at us, dost thou mind, when being young  
We both would unadvisedly recite  
Some charm’s beginning, from that book of his,  
Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst  
All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.  
Thou and the child have each a veil alike  
Thrown o’er your heads from under which ye both  
Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match  
Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know !  
He holds on firmly to some thread of life—  
(It is the life to lead perforceedly)  
Which runs across some vast distracting orb  
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,  
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—  
The spiritual life around the earthly life !  
The law of that is known to him as this—  
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.  
So is the man perplext with impulses

Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,  
Proclaiming what is Right and Wrong  
across—

And not along—this black thread through  
the blaze—

“It should be” balked by “here it cannot be.”  
And oft the man’s soul springs into his face  
As if he saw again and heard again  
His sage that bade him “Rise” and he did  
rise.

Something—a word, a tick of the blood  
within

Admonishes—then back he sinks at once  
To ashes, that was very fire before,  
In sedulous recurrence to his trade  
Whereby he earneth him the daily bread—  
And studiously the humbler for that pride,  
Professedly the faultier that he knows  
God’s secret, while he holds the thread of life.  
Indeed the especial marking of the man  
Is prone submission to the Heavenly will—  
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.  
‘Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last  
For that same death which will restore his  
being

To equilibrium, body loosening soul  
Divorced even now by premature full growth :  
He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live  
So long as God please, and just how God  
please.

He even seeketh not to please God more

(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God  
please.

Hence I perceive not he affects to preach  
The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be—  
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do.  
How can he give his neighbour the real  
ground,

His own conviction? ardent as he is—  
Call his great truth a lie, why still the old  
“Be it as God please” reassurēth him.  
I probed the sore as thy disciple should—  
“How, beast,” said I, “this stolid carelessness

Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march  
To stamp out like a little spark thy town,  
Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?”  
He merely looked with his large eyes on me.  
The man is apathetic, you deduce?

Contrariwise he loves both old and young,  
Able and weak—affects the very brutes  
And birds—how say I? flowers of the field—  
As a wise workman recognises tools  
In a master’s workshop, loving what they  
make.

Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb :  
Only impatient, let him do his best,  
At ignorance and carelessness and sin—  
An indignation which is promptly curbed.  
As when in certain travels I have feigned  
To be an ignoramus in our art  
According to some preconceived design,

And happed to hear the land's practitioners  
Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,  
Prattle fantastically on disease,  
Its cause and cure—and I must hold my  
peace !

Thou wilt object—why have I not ere this  
Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene  
Who wrought this cure, enquiring at the  
source,  
Conferring with the frankness that befits ?  
Alas ! it grieveth me, the learned leech  
Perished in a tumult many years ago,  
Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry,  
Rebellion, to the setting up a rule  
And creed prodigious as described to me.  
His death which happened when the earth-  
quake fell  
(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss  
To occult learning in our lord the sage  
That lived there in the pyramid alone)  
Was wrought by the mad people—that's  
their wont—  
On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,  
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—  
How could he stop the earthquake ? That's  
their way !  
The other imputations must be lies :  
But take one—though I loathe to give it thee,  
In mere respect to any good man's fame !  
(And after all our patient Lazarus

Is stark mad—should we count on what he says?

Perhaps not—though in writing to a leech  
'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)

This man so cured regards the curer then,  
As—God forgive me—who but God himself,  
Creator and Sustainer of the world,

That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!

—'Sayeth that such an One was born and  
lived,

Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his  
own house,

Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I  
know,

And yet was . . . what I said nor choose  
repeat,

And must have so avouched himself, in fact,  
In hearing of this very Lazarus

Who saith—but why all this of what he  
saith?

Why write of trivial matters, things of price  
Calling at every moment for remark?

I noticed on the margin of a pool

Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,  
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,  
Which, now that I review it, needs must seem  
Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth.

Nor I myself discern in what is writ  
Good cause for the peculiar interest

And awe indeed this man has touched me with.  
Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness  
Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus—  
I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills  
Like an old lion's cheek-teeth. Out there  
came

A moon made like a face with certain spots  
Multiform, manifold, and menacing :  
Then a wind rose behind me. So we met  
In this old sleepy town at unaware,  
The man and I. I send thee what is writ.  
Regard it as a chance, a matter risked  
To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,  
Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.  
Jerusalem's repose shall make amends  
For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine,  
Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God ! think, Abib ; dost thou  
think ?

So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—  
So, through the thunder comes a human  
voice

Saying, “ O heart I made, a heart beats here !  
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself.  
Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of  
mine,  
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,  
And thou must love me who have died for  
thee ! ”

The madman saith He said so : it is strange.

## RABBI BEN EZRA.

## I.

Grow old along with me !  
 The best is yet to be,  
 The last of life, for which the first was made :  
 Our times are in His hand  
 Who saith “A whole I planned,  
 “Youth shows but half ; trust God : see all  
 nor be afraid !”

## II.

Not that, amassing flowers,  
 Youth sighed “Which rose make ours,  
 “Which lily leave and then as best recall ?”  
 Not that, admiring stars,  
 It yearned “Nor Jove, nor Mars ;  
 “Mine be some figured flame which blends,  
 transcends them all !”

## III.

Not for such hopes and fears  
 Annulling youth’s brief years,  
 Do I remonstrate : folly wide the mark !  
 Rather I prize the doubt  
 Low kinds exist without,  
 Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a  
 spark.

## IV.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,  
Were man but formed to feed  
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast :  
Such feasting ended, then  
As sure an end to men ;  
Irks care the crop-full bird ? Frets doubt the  
maw-crammed beast ?

## V.

Rejoice we are allied  
To That which doth provide  
And not partake, effect and not receive !  
A spark disturbs our clod ;  
Nearer we hold of God  
Who gives, than of His tribes that take,  
I must believe.

## VI.

Then, welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but  
go !  
Be our joys three-parts pain !  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;  
Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never  
grudge the throe !

## VII.

For thence,—a paradox  
 Which comforts while it mocks,—  
 Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail :  
 What I aspired to be,  
 And was not, comforts me :  
 A brute I might have been, but would not  
 sink i' the scale.

## VIII.

What is he but a brute  
 Whose flesh has soul to suit,  
 Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want  
 play ?  
 To man, propose this test—  
 Thy body at its best,  
 How far can that project thy soul on its  
 lone way ?

## IX.

Yet gifts should prove their use :  
 I own the Past profuse  
 Of power each side, perfection every turn :  
 Eyes, ears took in their dole,  
 Brain treasured up the whole ;  
 Should not the heart beat once “ How good  
 to live and learn ” ?

## X.

Not once beat “ Praise be Thine !  
 “ I see the whole design, .

"I, who saw power, see now love perfect  
too :

"Perfect I call Thy plan :

"Thanks that I was a man !

"Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what  
Thou shalt do !"

#### XI.

For pleasant is this flesh ;

Our soul, in its rose-mesh

Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for  
rest ;

Would we some prize might hold .

To match those manifold

Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we  
did best !

#### XII.

Let us not always say

"Spite of this flesh to-day

"I strove, made head, gained ground upon  
the whole !"

As the bird wings and sings,

Let us cry "All good things

"Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now,  
than flesh helps soul !"

#### XIII.

Therefore I summon age

To grant youth's heritage,

Life's struggle having so far reached its term :

Thence shall I pass, approved  
 A man, for aye removed  
 From the developed brute ; a god though  
 in the germ.

## xiv.

And I shall thereupon  
 Take rest, ere I be gone  
 Once more on my adventure brave and  
 new :

Fearless and unperplexed,  
 When I wage battle next,  
 What weapons to select, what armour to  
 indue.

## xv.

Youth ended, I shall try  
 My gain or loss thereby ;  
 Leave the fire ashes, what survives is  
 gold :

And I shall weigh the same,  
 Give life its praise or blame :  
 Young, all lay in dispute ; I shall know,  
 being old.

## xvi.

For note, when evening shuts,  
 A certain moment cuts  
 The deed off, calls the glory from the gray :

A whisper from the west  
 Shoots—"Add this to the rest,  
 "Take it and try its worth : here dies another  
 day."

## XVII.

So, still within this life,  
 Though lifted o'er its strife,  
 Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,  
 "This rage was right i' the main,  
 "That acquiescence vain :  
 "The Future I may face now I have proved  
 the Past."

## XVIII.

For more is not reserved  
 To man, with soul just nerved  
 To act to-morrow what he learns to-day :  
 Here, work enough to watch  
 The Master work, and catch  
 Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's  
 true play.

## XIX.

As it was better, youth  
 Should strive, through acts uncouth,  
 Toward making, than repose on aught found  
 made :  
 So, better, age, exempt  
 From strife, should know, than tempt  
 Further. Thou waitedest age : wait death  
 nor be afraid !

## XX.

Enough now, if the Right  
 And Good and Infinite  
**Be** named here, as thou callest thy hand  
 thine own,  
 With knowledge absolute,  
 Subject to no dispute  
 From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee  
 feel alone.

## XXI.

Be there, for once and all,  
 Severed great minds from small,  
**Announced** to each his station in the Past !  
 Was I, the world arraigned,  
 Were they, my soul disdained,  
**Right?** Let age speak the truth and give  
 us peace at last !

## XXII.

Now, who shall arbitrate ?  
 Ten men love what I hate,  
**Shun** what I follow, slight what I receive ;  
 Ten, who in ears and eyes  
 Match me : we all surmise,  
**They** this thing, and I that : whom shall my  
 soul believe ?

## XXIII.

Not on the vulgar mass  
 Called " work," must sentence pass,

Things done, that took the eye and had the  
price ;

O'er which, from level stand,

The low world laid its hand,

Found straightway to its mind, could value  
in a trice :

XXIV.

But all, the world's coarse thumb

And finger failed to plumb,

So passed in making up the main account ;

All instincts immature,

All purposes unsure,

That weighed not as his work, yet swelled  
the man's amount :

XXV.

Thoughts hardly to be packed

Into a narrow act,

Fancies that broke through language and  
escaped ;

All I could never be,

All, men ignored in me,

This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the  
pitcher shaped.

XXVI.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,

That metaphor ! and feel

Why time spins fast, why passive lies our  
clay,—

Thou, to whom fools propound,  
 When the wine makes its round,  
 "Since life fleets, all is change ; the Past  
 gone, seize to-day !"

## XXVII.

Fool ! All that is, at all,  
 Lasts ever, past recall ;  
 Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand  
 sure :  
 What entered into thee,  
 That was, is, and shall be :  
 Time's wheel runs back or stops : Potter  
 and clay endure.

## XXVIII.

He fixed thee mid this dance  
 Of plastic circumstance,  
 This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain  
 arrest :  
 Machinery just meant  
 To give thy soul its bent,  
 Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently  
 impressed.

## XXIX.

What though the earlier grooves  
 Which ran the laughing loves  
 Around thy base, no longer pause and press ?

What though, about thy rim,  
 Skull-things in order grim  
 Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner  
 stress ?

## XXX.

Look not thou down but up .  
 To uses of a cup,  
 The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's  
 peal,  
 The new wine's foaming flow,  
 The Master's lips a-glow !  
 Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st  
 thou with earth's wheel ?

## XXXI.

But I need, now as then,  
 Thee, God, who mouldest men ;  
 And since, not even while the whirl was  
 worst,  
 Did I,—to the wheel of life  
 With shapes and colours rife,  
 Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake  
 Thy thirst :

## XXXII.

So, take and use Thy work :  
 Amend what flaws may lurk,  
 What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past  
 the aim !

My times be in Thy hand !  
 Perfect the cup as planned !  
 Let age approve of youth, and death complete  
 the same !

## LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

## I.

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening  
 smiles  
 Miles and miles  
 On the solitary pastures where our sheep  
 Half-asleep  
 Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or  
 stop  
 As they crop—

## II.

Was the site once of a city great and gay,  
 (So they say)  
 Of our country's very capital, its prince  
 Ages since  
 Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding  
 far  
 Peace or war.

## III.

Now—the country does not even boast a tree,  
 As you see,

To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills  
 From the hills  
 Intersect and give a name to, (else they run  
 Into one)

## IV.

Where the domed and daring palace shot  
 its spires  
 Up like fires  
 O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall  
 Bounding all,  
 Made of marble, men might march on nor  
 be prest,  
 Twelve abreast.

## V.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass  
 Never was !  
 Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'er-  
 spreads  
 And embeds  
 Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,  
 Stock or stone—

## VI.

Where a multitude of men breathed joy and  
 woe  
 Long ago ;

Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread  
of shame

Struck them tame;  
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold  
Bought and sold.

## VII.

Now,—the single little turret that remains  
On the plains,  
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd  
Overscored,  
While the patching houseleek's head of  
blossom winks  
Through the chinks—

## VIII.

Marks the basement whence a tower in  
ancient time  
Sprang sublime,  
And a burning ring all round, the chariots  
traced  
As they raced  
And the monarch and his minions and his  
dames  
Viewed the games.

## IX.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured  
eve  
Smiles to leave

To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece  
In such peace,  
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished  
gray  
Melt away—

## X.

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair  
Waits me there  
In the turret, whence the charioteers caught  
soul  
For the goal,  
When the king looked, where she looks  
now, breathless, dumb  
Till I come.

## XI.

But he looked upon the city, every side,  
Far and wide,  
All the mountains topped with temples, all  
the glades'  
Colonnades,  
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and  
then,  
All the men !

## XII.

When I do come, she will speak not, she  
will stand,  
Either hand

On my shoulder, give her eyes the first  
embrace

Of my face,

Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and  
speech

Each on each.

### XIII.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth  
South and north.

And they built their gods a brazen pillar  
high

As the sky,

Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full  
force—

Gold, or course.

### XIV.

Oh, heart ! oh, blood that freezes, blood that  
burns !

Earth's returns

For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin !

Shut them in,

With their triumphs and their glories and  
the rest.

**Love is best !**

## SONG.

## I.

NAY but you, who do not love her,  
Is she not pure gold, my mistress ?  
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her ?  
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,  
And this last fairest tress of all,  
So fair, see, ere I let it fall ?

## II.

Because, you spend your lives in praising ;  
To praise, you search the wide world  
over ;  
So, why not witness, calmly gazing,  
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above  
her ?  
Above this tress, and this I touch  
But cannot praise, I love so much !

## A LOVER'S QUARREL.

## I.

OH, what a dawn of day !  
 How the March sun feels like May !  
     All is blue again  
     After last night's rain,  
 And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.  
     Only, my Love's away !  
 I'd as lief that the blue were gray.

## II.

Runnels, which rilles swell,  
 Must be dancing down the dell  
     With a foamy head  
     On the beryl bed  
 Paven smooth as a hermit's cell :  
     Each with a tale to tell,  
 Could my Love but attend as well.

## III.

Dearest, three months ago !  
 When we lived blocked-up with snow,—  
     When the wind would edge  
     In and in his wedge,  
 In, as far as the point could go—  
     Not to our ingle, though,  
 Where we loved each the other so !

## IV.

Laughs with so little cause !  
We devised games out of straws.  
    We would try and trace  
    One another's face  
In the ash, as an artist draws ;  
    Free on each other's flaws,  
How we chattered like two church daws !

## V.

What's in the "Times" ?—a scold  
At the emperor deep and cold ;  
    He has taken a bride  
    To his gruesome side,  
That's as fair as himself is bold :  
    There they sit ermine-stoled,  
And she powders her hair with gold.

## VI.

Fancy the Pampas' sheen !  
Miles and miles of gold and green  
    Where the sun-flowers blow  
    In a solid glow,  
And to break now and then the screen—  
    Black neck and eyeballs keen,  
Up a wild horse leaps between !

## VII.

Try, will our table turn ?  
Lay your hands there light, and yearn

Till the yearning slips  
Thro' the finger tips  
In a fire which a few discern,  
And a very few feel burn,  
And the rest, they may live and learn !

## VIII.

Then we would up and pace,  
For a change, about the place,  
Each with arm o'er neck.  
'Tis our quarter-deck,  
We are seamen in woeful case.  
Help in the ocean-space !  
Or, if no help, we'll embrace.

## IX.

See, how she looks now, drest  
In a sledging-cap and vest.  
'Tis a huge fur cloak—  
Like a reindeer's yoke  
Falls the lappet along the breast :  
Sleeves for her arms to rest,  
Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

## X.

Teach me to flirt a fan  
As the Spanish ladies can,  
Or I tint your lip  
With a burn't stick's tip

And you turn into such a man !

Just the two spots that span  
Half the bill of the young male swan.

## XI.

Dearest, three months ago  
When the mesmeriser Snow  
With his hand's first sweep  
Put the earth to sleep,  
'Twas a time when the heart could show  
All—how was earth to know,  
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro !

## XII.

Dearest, three months ago  
When we loved each other so,  
Lived and loved the same  
Till an evening came  
When a shaft from the Devil's bow  
Pierced to our ingle-glow,  
And the friends were friend and foe !

## XIII.

Not from the heart beneath—  
'Twas a bubble born of breath,  
Neither sneer nor vaunt,  
Nor reproach nor taunt.  
See a word, how it severeth !  
    Oh, power of life and death  
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith :

## XIV.

Woman, and will you cast  
 For a word, quite off at last,  
     Me, your own, your you,—  
     Since, as Truth is true,  
 I was you all the happy past—  
     Me do you leave aghast  
 With the memories we amassed ?

## XV.

Love, if you knew the light  
 That your soul casts in my sight,  
     How I look to you  
     For the pure and true,  
 And the beauteous and the right,—  
     Bear with a moment's spite  
 When a mere mote threatens the white !

## XVI.

What of a hasty word ?  
 Is the fleshly heart not stirred  
     By a worm's pin-prick  
     Where its roots are quick ?  
 See the eye, by a fly's-foot blurred—  
     Ear, when a straw is heard  
 Scratch the brain's coat of curd !

## XVII.

Foul be the world or fair,  
 More or less, how can I care ?

'Tis the world the same  
 For my praise or blame,  
 And endurance is easy there.  
 Wrong in the one thing rare—  
 Oh, it is hard to bear !

## XVIII.

Here's the spring back or close,  
 When the almond-blossom blows ;  
 We shall have the word  
 In that minor third  
 There is none but the cuckoo knows—  
 Heaps of the guelder-rose !  
 I must bear with it, I suppose.

## XIX.

Could but November come,  
 Were the noisy birds struck dumb  
 At the warning slash  
 Of his driver's-lash—  
 I would laugh like the valiant Thumb  
 Facing the castle glum  
 And the giant's fee-faw-fum !

## XX.

Then, were the world well stript  
 Of the gear wherein equipped  
 We can stand apart,  
 Heart dispense with heart

In the sun, with the flowers unnipped,—  
    Oh, the world's hangings ripped,  
We were both in a bare-walled crypt !

## XXI.

Each in the crypt would cry  
“ But one freezes here ! and why ?  
    When a heart as chill  
        At my own would thrill  
Back to life, and its fires out-fly ?  
    Heart, shall we live or die ?  
The rest, . . . settle it by and by ! ”

## XXII.

So, she'd efface the score,  
And forgive me as before.  
    Just at twelve o'clock  
        I shall hear her knock  
In the worst of a storm's uproar—  
    I shall pull her through the door—  
I shall have her for evermore !

## FRA LIPPO LIPPI.

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave !  
You need not clap your torches to my face.  
Zooks, what's to blame ? you think you see a  
monk !

What, it's past midnight, and you go the  
rounds,

And here you catch me at an alley's end  
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar.  
The Carmine's my cloister : hunt it up,  
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,  
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong  
hole,

And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,  
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him com-  
pany !

Aha, you know your betters ? Then, you'll  
take

Your hand away that's fiddling on my  
throat,

And please to know me likewise. Who am  
I ?

Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend  
Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how  
d'ye call ?

Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,  
In the house that caps the corner. Boh !  
you were best !

Remember and tell me, the day you're  
hanged.

How you affected such a gullet's-gripe !  
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves  
Pick up a manner nor discredit you.

Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the  
streets

And count fair prize what comes into their  
net ?

He's Judas to a tittle, that man is !  
Just such a face ! why, sir, you make amends.  
Lord ! I'm not angry ! Bid your hangdogs  
go

Drink out this quarter-florin to the health  
Of the munificent House that harbours me  
(And many more beside, lads ! more beside !)  
And all's come square again. I'd like his  
face—

His, elbowing on his comrade in the door  
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave  
that holds

John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair  
With one hand ("look you, now," as who  
should say)

And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped !  
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,  
A wood-coal or the like ? or you should see !  
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.  
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,  
You know them and they take you ? like  
enough !

I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—  
'Tell you I liked your looks at very first.  
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to  
haunch.  
Here's spring come, and the nights one  
makes up bands  
To roam the town and sing out carnival,  
And I've been three weeks shut within my  
mew,  
A-painting for the great man, saints and  
saints  
And saints again. I could not paint all  
night—  
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh  
air.  
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,  
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whists  
of song,—  
*Flower o' the broom,*  
*Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!*  
*Flower o' the quince,*  
*I let Lisa go, and what good's in life since?*  
*Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they*  
went.  
Scarce had they turned the corner when a  
titter,  
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight—  
three slim shapes—  
And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir,  
flesh and blood,  
That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,

Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,  
All the bed furniture—a dozen knots,  
There was a ladder ! down I let myself,  
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and  
so dropped,  
And after them. I came up with the fun  
Hard by St. Laurence, hail fellow, well met,—  
*Flower o' the rose,*  
*If I've been merry, what matter who knows ?*  
And so as I was stealing back again  
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep  
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work  
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast  
With his great round stone to subdue the  
flesh,  
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see !  
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake  
your head—  
Mine's shaved,—a monk, you say—the sting's  
in that !  
If Master Cosimo announced himself,  
Mum's the word naturally ; but a monk !  
Come, what am I a beast for ? tell us, now !  
I was a baby when my mother died  
And father died and left me in the street.  
I starved there, God knows how, a year or  
two  
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and  
shucks,  
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day  
My stomach being empty as your hat,

The wind doubled me up and down I went.  
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,  
(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)  
And so along the wall, over the bridge,  
By the straight cut to the convent. Six  
words, there,  
While I stood munching my first bread that  
month :  
" So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good  
fat father  
Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refec-tion-  
time,—  
" To quit this very miserable world ?  
Will you renounce " . . . The mouthful of  
bread ? thought I ;  
By no means ! Brief, they made a monk of  
me ;  
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,  
Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,  
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici  
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years  
old.  
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,  
'Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,  
The warm serge and the rope that goes all  
round,  
And day-long blessed idleness beside !  
" Let's see what the urchin's fit for"—that  
came next.  
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.  
Such a to-do ! they tried me with their books.

Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste !

*Flower o' the clove,*

*All the Latin I construe is, "amo" I love !*

But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets

Eight years together, as my fortune was,  
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling

The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,

And who will curse or kick him for his pains—

Which gentleman processional and fine,  
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,  
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch  
The droppings of the wax to sell again,  
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,—

How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop

His bone from the heap of offal in the street !

—The soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,

He learns the look of things, and none the less

For admonitions from the hunger-pinch.

I had a store of such remarks, be sure,

Which, after I found leisure, turned to use :  
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,

Scrawled them within the antiphonary's  
marge,  
Joined legs and arms to the long music-  
notes,  
Found nose and eyes and chin for A's  
and B's,  
And made a string of pictures of the world  
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,  
On the wall, the bench, the door. The  
monks looked black.  
"Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out,  
d'ye say?  
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.  
What if at last we get our man of parts,  
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolesse  
And Preaching Friars, to do our church up  
fine  
And put the front on it that ought to be!"  
And hereupon they bade me daub away.  
Thank you! my head being crammed, their  
walls a blank,  
Never was such prompt disemburdening.  
First, every sort of monk, the black and  
white,  
I drew them, fat and lean: then folks at  
church,  
From good old gossips waiting to confess  
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-  
ends,—  
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,  
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there

With the little children round him in a row  
Of admiration, half for his beard and half  
For that white anger of his victim's son  
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,  
Signing himself with the other because of  
Christ

(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this  
After the passion of a thousand years)  
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head  
Which the intense eyes looked through, came  
at eve

On tip-toe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,  
Her pair of ear-rings and a bunch of flowers  
The brute took growling, prayed, and then  
was gone.

I painted all, then cried " 'tis ask and have—  
Choose, for more's ready!" —laid the ladder  
flat,

And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.  
The monks closed in a circle and praised  
loud

Till checked, (taught what to see and not to  
see,

Being simple bodies) "that's the very man !  
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog !  
That woman's like the Prior's niece who  
comes

To care about his asthma : it's the life !  
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and  
funked—

Their betters took their turn to see and say :

The Prior and the learned pulled a face  
And stopped all that in no time. "How?  
what's here?"

Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!  
Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true  
As much as pea and pea! it's devil's-game!  
Your business is not to catch men with show,  
With homage to the perishable clay,  
But lift them over it, ignore it all,  
Make them forget there's such a thing as  
flesh.

Your business is to paint the souls of men—  
Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no it's  
not . . .

It's vapour done up like a new-born babe—  
(In that shape when you die it leaves your  
mouth)

It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the  
soul!

Give us no more of body than shows soul.  
Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising  
God!

That sets you praising,—why not stop with  
him?

Why put all thoughts of praise out of our  
heads

With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?  
Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!  
Rub all out, try at it a second time.

Oh, that white smallish female with the  
breasts,

She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—

Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off—

Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?  
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body  
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further  
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white

When what you put for yellow's simply black,

And any sort of meaning looks intense  
When all beside itself means and looks nought.

Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,  
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,  
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,  
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,  
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty

You can't discover if it means hope, fear,  
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?  
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,

Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,  
And then add soul and heighten them three-fold?

Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—  
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)  
If you get simple beauty and nought else,  
You get about the best thing God invents,—

That's somewhat. And you'll find the soul  
you have missed,  
Within yourself when you return Him thanks !  
" Rub all out !" well, well, there's my life,  
in short,  
And so the thing has gone on ever since.  
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken  
bounds—  
You should not take a fellow eight years old  
And make him swear to never kiss the  
girls—  
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—  
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-  
house !  
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in  
front—  
Those great rings serve more purposes than  
just  
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse !  
And yet the old schooling sticks—the old  
grave eyes  
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,  
The heads shake still—" It's Art's decline,  
my son !  
You're not of the true painters, great and  
old :  
Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find :  
Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer.  
Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the  
third !"  
*Flower o' the pine,*

*You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll  
stick to mine!*

I'm not the third, then : bless us, they must  
know !

Don't you think they're the likeliest to  
know,

They, with their Latin? so I swallow my  
rage,

Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and  
paint

To please them—sometimes do, and some-  
times don't,

For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come  
A turn—some warm eve finds me at my  
saints—

A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—  
(*Flower o' the peach,*

*Death for us all, and his own life for each!*)

And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs  
o'er,

The world and life's too big to pass for a  
dream,

And I do these wild things in sheer despite,

And play the fooleries you catch me at,

In pure rage! the old mill-horse, out at  
grass

After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,

Although the miller does not preach to him

The only good of grass is to make chaff.

What would men have? Do they like  
grass or no—

May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing

Settled for ever one way: as it is

You tell too many lies and hurt yourself.

You don't like what you only like too much,  
You do like what, if given you at your word,

You find abundantly detestable.

For me, I think I speak as I was taught—

I always see the Garden and God there

A-making man's wife — and, my lesson learned,

The value and significance of flesh,  
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterward.

You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.  
But see, now—why, I see as certainly  
As that the morning-star's about to shine,  
What will hap some day. We've a youngster here

Comes to our convent, studies what I do,  
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop—  
His name is Guidi — he'll not mind the monks—

They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—

He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,  
I hope so—though I never live so long,  
I know what's sure to follow. You be judge!

You speak no Latin more than I, belike—

However, you're my man, you've seen the world

—The beauty and the wonder and the power,

The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,

Changes, surprises,—and God made it all !

—For what? do you feel thankful, ay or no,  
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,

The mountain round it and the sky above,  
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,

These are the frame to? What's it all about?

To be passed o'er, despised? or dwelt upon,  
Wondered at? oh, this last of course, you say.

But why not do as well as say,—paint these  
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?  
God's works—paint anyone, and count it crime

To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works

Are here already—nature is complete:

Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)

There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."

For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love

First when we see them painted, things we  
have passed

Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see ;  
And so they are better, painted—better to  
us,

Which is the same thing. Art was given  
for that—

God uses us to help each other so,  
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed,  
now,

Your cullion's hanging face ? A bit of chalk,  
And trust me but you should though ! How  
much more,

If I drew higher things with the same truth !  
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,  
Interpret God to all of you ! oh, oh,  
It makes me mad to see what men shall do  
And we in our graves ! This world's no  
blot for us,

Nor blank—it means intensely, and means  
good :

To find its meaning in my meat and drink.  
“ Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer,”  
Strikes in the Prior ! “ when your meaning's  
plain

It does not say to folks—remember matins—  
Or, mind you fast next Friday.” Why, for  
this

What need of art at all ? A skull and bones,  
Two bits of stick nailed cross-wise, or,  
what's best,

A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.  
I painted a St. Laurence six months since  
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style.  
“ How looks my painting, now the scaffold’s  
down ? ”

I ask a brother : “ Hugely,” he returns—  
“ Already not one phiz of your three slaves  
That turn the Deacon off his toasted side,  
But’s scratched and prodded to our heart’s  
content,

The pious people have so eased their own  
When coming to say prayers there in a rage.  
We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.  
Expect another job this time next year,  
For pity and religion grow i’ the crowd—  
Your painting serves its purpose ! ” Hang  
the fools !

—That is—you’ll not mistake an idle word  
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,  
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns  
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine !  
Oh, the church knows ! don’t misreport me,  
now !

It’s natural a poor monk out of bounds  
Should have his apt word to excuse himself :  
And hearken how I plot to make amends.  
I have bethought me ; I shall paint a piece  
. . . There’s for you ! Give me six months,  
then go, see  
Something in Sant’ Ambrogio’s . . . (bless  
the nuns !

They want a cast of my office) I shall paint  
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,  
Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,  
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet  
As puff on puff of grated orris-root  
When ladies crowd to church at mid-  
summer.

And then in the front, of course a saint or  
two—

Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,  
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and  
white

The convent's friends and gives them a long  
day,

And Job, I must have him there past mistake,  
The man of Uz, (and Us without the z.

Painters who need his patience.) Well, all  
these

Secured at their devotions, up shall come  
Out of a corner when you least expect,  
As one by a dark stair into a great light,  
Music and talking, who but Lippo ! I !—  
Mazed, motionless and moonstruck—I'm the  
man !

Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear ?  
I, caught up with my monk's things by  
mistake,

My old serge gown and rope that goes all  
round,

I, in this presence, this pure company !  
Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape ?

Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing  
Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so  
fast!"

—Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—  
He made you and devised you, after all,  
Though he's none of you! Could Saint  
John there draw—

His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?  
We come to brother Lippo for all that,  
*Iste perfecit opus!*" So, all smile—  
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face  
Under the cover of a hundred wings  
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're  
gay

And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,  
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops  
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off  
To some safe bench behind, not letting go  
The palm of her, the little lily thing  
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,  
Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I  
would say.

And so all's saved for me, and for the church  
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months  
hence!

Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights,  
no lights!

The street's hushed, and I know my own  
way back—

Don't fear me! There's the gray beginning.  
Zooks!

## ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND.

## I.

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou  
Who art all truth and who dost love me now  
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to  
say—  
Should'st love so truly and could'st love me  
still  
A whole long life through, had but love its  
will,  
Would death that leads me from thee  
brook delay !

## II.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand  
Would never let mine go, thy heart withstand  
The beating of my heart to reach its place.  
When should I look for thee and feel thee  
gone?  
When cry for the old comfort and find none?  
Never, I know ! Thy soul is in thy face.

## III.

Oh, I should fade—'tis willed so ! might I  
save,  
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave  
Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.  
It is not to be granted. But the soul

Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves  
that whole;  
Vainly the flesh fades—soul makes all  
things new.

## IV.

And 'twould not be because my eye grew dim  
Thou could'st not find the love there, thanks  
to Him

Who never is dishonoured in the spark  
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade  
Remember whence it sprang nor be afraid  
While that burns on, though all the rest  
grow dark.

## V.

So, how thou would'st be perfect, white and  
clean  
Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne  
Alike, this body given to show it by!  
Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's  
abyss,  
What plaudits from the next world after  
this,  
Could'st thou repeat a stroke and gain the  
sky!

## VI.

And is it not the bitterer to think  
That, disengage our hands and thou wilt  
sink  
Although thy love was love in very deed?

I know that nature ! Pass a festive day,  
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away  
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

## VII.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell ;  
If old things remain old things all is well,  
For thou art grateful as becomes man best :  
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,  
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon  
With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

## VIII.

I seem to see ! we meet and part : 'tis brief :  
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,  
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank ;  
That is a portrait of me on the wall—  
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call ;  
And for all this, one little hour's to thank.

## IX.

But now, because the hour through years  
was fixed,  
Because our inmost beings met and mixed,  
Because thou once hast loved me—wilt thou dare

Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,  
 "Therefore she is immortally my bride,  
 Chance cannot change that love, nor time  
 impair.

## X.

"So, what if in the dusk of life that's left,  
 I, a tired traveller, of my sun bereft,  
 Look from my path when, mimicking the  
 same,  
 The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and  
 gone?  
 —Where was it till the sunset? where anon  
 It will be at the sunrise! what's to  
 blame?"

## XI.

Is it so helpful to thee? canst thou take  
 The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,  
 Put gently by such efforts at a beam?  
 Is the remainder of the way so long  
 Thou need'st the little solace, thou the  
 strong?  
 Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze  
 and dream!

## XII.

"—Ah, but the fresher faces! Is it true,"  
 Thou'l ask, "some eyes are beautiful and  
 new?  
 Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp  
 such wealth?

And if a man would press his lips to lips  
Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there  
slips  
The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth ?

## XIII.

" It cannot change the love kept still for Her,  
Much more than, such a picture to prefer  
Passing a day with, to a room's bare side.  
The painted form takes nothing she  
possessed,  
Yet while the Titian's Venus lies at rest  
A man looks. Once more, what is there  
to chide ? "

## XIV.

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,  
My own self sell myself, my hand attach  
Its warrant to the very thefts from me—  
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,  
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,  
Thy man's truth I was bold to bid God  
see !

## XV.

Love so, then, if thou wilt ! Give all thou  
canst  
Away to the new faces—disentranced—  
(Say it and think it) obdurate no more,  
Re-issue looks and words from the old mint—  
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print  
Image and superscription once they bore !

## XVI.

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—  
 It all comes to the same thing at the end,  
   Since mine thou wast, mine art, and mine  
   shalt be,  
 Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum  
 Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come  
   Back to the heart's place here I keep for  
   thee !

## XVII.

Only, why should it be with stain at all ?  
 Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,  
   Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow ?  
 Why need the other women know so much  
 And talk together, " Such the look and such  
   The smile he used to love with, then as  
   now ! "

## XVIII.

Might I die last and shew thee ! Should  
   I find  
 Such hardship in the few years left behind,  
   If free to take and light my lamp, and go  
 Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit  
 Seeing thy face on those four sides of it  
   The better that they are so blank, I know !

## XIX.

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er  
 Within my mind each look, get more and  
   more

By heart each word, too much to learn at  
first,  
And join thee all the fitter for the pause  
'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That were  
cause  
For lingering, though thou calledst, if I  
durst !

## xx.

And yet thou art the nobler of us two.  
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not  
do,  
Outstripping my ten small steps with one  
stride?  
I'll say then, here's a trial and a task—  
Is it to bear?—if easy, I'll not ask—  
Though love fail, I can trust on in thy  
pride.

## xxi.

Pride?—when those eyes forestal the life  
behind  
The death I have to go through!—when I  
find,  
Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!  
What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me  
fast  
Until the little minute's sleep is past  
And I wake saved.—And yet, it will not  
be!

## A SERENADE AT THE VILLA.

## I.

THAT was I, you heard last night  
 When there rose no moon at all,  
 Nor, to pierce the strained and tight  
 Tent of heaven, a planet small :  
 Life was dead, and so was light.

## II.

Not a twinkle from the fly,  
 Not a glimmer from the worm.  
 When the crickets stopped their cry,  
 When the owls forbore a term,  
 You heard music ; that was I.

## III.

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,  
 Sultrily suspired for proof :  
 In at heaven and out again,  
 Lightning !—where it broke the roof  
 Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

## IV.

What they could my words expressed,  
 O my love, my all, my one !

Singing helped the verses best,  
 And when singing's best was done,  
 To my lute I left the rest.

## V.

So wore night ; the east was gray,  
 White the broad-faced hemlock flowers ;  
 Soon would come another day ;  
 Ere its first of heavy hours  
 Found me, I had past away.

## VI.

What became of all the hopes,  
 Words and song and lute as well ?  
 Say, this struck you—“ When life gropes  
 Feebly for the path where fell  
 Light last on the evening slopes.

## VII.

“ One friend in that path shall be  
 To secure my steps from wrong ;  
 One to count night day for me,  
 Patient through the watches long,  
 Serving most with none to see.”

## VIII.

Never say—as something bodes—  
 “ So the worst has yet a worse !  
 When life halts 'neath double loads,  
 Better the task-master's curse  
 Than such music on the roads !

## IX.

“ When no moon succeeds the sun,  
Nor can pierce the midnight’s tent  
Any star, the smallest one,  
While some drops, where lightning went,  
Show the final storm begun—

## X.

“ When the fire-fly hides its spot,  
When the garden-voices fail  
In the darkness thick and hot,—  
Shall another voice avail,  
That shape be where those are not ?

## XI.

“ Has some plague a longer lease  
Proffering its help uncouth ?  
Can’t one even die in peace ?  
As one shuts one’s eyes on youth,  
Is that face the last one sees ? ”

## XII.

Oh, how dark your villa was,  
Windows fast and obdurate !  
How the garden grudged me grass  
Where I stood—the iron gate  
Ground its teeth to let me pass !

**"DE GUSTIBUS—"**

**I.**

**Y**OUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,  
 (If loves remain)

In an English lane,  
 By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.  
 Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—  
 A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,  
 Making love, say,—  
 The happier they !

Draw yourself up from the light of the moon  
 And let them pass, as they will too soon,  
 With the beanflowers' boon,  
 And the blackbird's tune,  
 And May, and June !

**II.**

**W**hat I love best in all the world,  
 Is, a castle, precipice-encurled,  
 In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.  
 Or look for me, old fellow of mine,  
 (If I get my head from out the mouth  
 O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,  
 And come again to the land of lands)—  
 In a sea-side house to the farther south,  
 Where the baked cicadas die of drouth,  
 And one sharp tree ('tis a cypress) stands,

By the many hundred years red-rusted,  
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,  
My sentinel to guard the sands  
To the water's edge. For, what expands  
Without the house, but the great opaque  
Blue breadth of sea, and not a break?  
While, in the house, for ever crumbles  
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,  
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.  
A girl bare-footed brings and tumbles  
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,  
And says there's news to-day—the king  
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,  
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling.  
—She hopes they have not caught the felon!  
Italy, my Italy !  
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—  
(When fortune's malice  
Lost her, Calais.)  
Open my heart and you will see  
Graved inside of it, " Italy."  
Such lovers old are I and she ;  
So it always was, so it still shall be !

## WOMEN AND ROSES.

## I.

I DREAM of a red-rose tree,  
And which of its roses three  
Is the dearest rose to me ?

## II.

Round and round, like a dance of snow  
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go  
Floating the women faded for ages,  
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.  
Then follow the women fresh and gay,  
Living and loving and loved to-day.  
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of  
maidens,  
Beauties unborn. And all, to one cadence,  
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

## III.

Dear rose, thy term is reached,  
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached :  
Bees pass it unimpeached.

## IV.

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,  
You, great shapes of the antique time !

How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,  
 Break my heart at your feet to please you ?  
 Oh ! to possess, and be possessed !  
 Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast !  
 But once of love, the poesy, the passion,  
 Drink once and die !—In vain, the same  
     fashion,  
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

## V.

Dear rose, thy joy's undimmed ;  
 Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,  
 Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed

## VI.

Deep as drops from a statue's plinth  
 The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,  
 So will I bury me while burning,  
 Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,  
 Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips !  
 Fold me fast where the cincture slips,  
 Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure !  
 Girdle me once ? But no—in their old  
     measure  
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

## VII.

Dear rose without a thorn,  
 Thy bud's the babe unborn :  
 First streak of a new morn.

## VIII.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear !  
What's far conquers what is near.  
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,  
Sprung from the dust where our own flesh  
moulders.  
What shall arrive with the cycle's change ?  
A novel grace and a beauty strange.  
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began  
her,  
Shaped her to his mind !—Alas ! in like  
manner  
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO  
ABD-EL-KADR.

[1842.]

## I.

As I ride, as I ride,  
With a full heart for my guide,  
So its tide rocks my side,  
As I ride, as I ride,  
That, as I were double-eyed,  
He, in whom our Tribes confide,  
Is descried, ways untried  
As I ride, as I ride.

## II.

As I ride, as I ride  
To our Chief and his Allied,  
Who dares chide my heart's pride  
As I ride, as I ride?  
Or are witnesses denied—  
Through the desert waste and wide  
Do I glide unespied  
As I ride, as I ride?

## III.

As I ride, as I ride,  
When an inner voice has cried,  
The sands slide, nor abide  
(As I ride, as I ride)  
O'er each visioned Homicide  
That came vaunting (has he lied?)  
To reside—where he died,  
As I ride, as I ride.

## IV.

As I ride, as I ride,  
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,  
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,  
As I ride, as I ride,  
Shows where sweat has sprung and  
dried,  
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—

How has vied stride with stride  
As I ride, as I ride !

## v.

As I ride, as I ride,  
Could I loose what Fate has tied,  
Ere I pried, she should hide  
As I ride, as I ride,  
All that's meant me : satisfied  
When the Prophet and the Bride  
Stop veins I'd have subside  
As I ride, as I ride !

## MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA.

## I.

HIST, but a word, fair and soft !  
Forth and be judged, Master Hugues !  
Answer the question I've put you so oft—  
What do you mean by your mountainous  
fugues ?  
See, we're alone in the loft,

## II.

I, the poor organist here,  
Hugues, the composer of note—

Dead, though, and done with, this many a  
year—

Let's have a colloquy, something to quote,  
Make the world prick up its ear !

### III.

See, the church empties apace.

Fast they extinguish the lights—

Hallo, there, sacristan ! five minutes' grace !

Here's a crank pedal wants setting to  
rights,

Baulks one of holding the base.

### IV.

See, our huge house of the sounds

Hushing its hundreds at once,

Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds

—Oh, you may challenge them, not a  
response

Get the church saints on their rounds !

### V.

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt ?

—March, with the moon to admire,

Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,

Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,

Put rats and mice to the rout—

## VI.

Aloys and Jurien and Just—  
 Order things back to their place,  
 Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,  
 Rub the church plate, darn the sacrament  
 lace,  
 Clear the desk velvet of dust.)

## VII.

Here's your book, younger folks shelve !  
 Played I not off-hand and runningly,  
 Just now, your masterpiece, hard number  
 twelve ?  
 Here's what should strike,—could one  
 handle it cunningly.  
 Help the axe, give it a helve !

## VIII.

Page after page as I played,  
 Every bar's rest where one wipes  
 Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and  
 surveyed  
 O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes  
 Whence you still peeped in the shade.

## IX.

Sure you were wishful to speak,  
 You, with brow ruled like a score,

Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,  
 Like two great breves, as they wrote them  
 of yore,  
 Each side that bar, your straight beak !

## X.

Sure you said—“ Good, the mere notes !  
 Still, couldst thou take my intent,  
 Know what procured me our Company's  
 votes—  
 Masters being lauded and sciolists shent,  
 Parted the sheep from the goats !”

## XI.

Well then, speak up, never flinch !  
 Quick, ere my candle's a snuff .  
 —Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost  
 inch—  
 I believe in you, but that's not enough  
 Give my conviction a clinch !

## XII.

First you deliver your phrase  
 —Nothing propound, that I see,  
 Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—  
 Answered no less, where no answer needs  
 be :  
 Off start the Two on their ways !

## XIII.

Straight must a Third interpose,  
 Volunteer needlessly help—  
 In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his  
     nose,  
 So the cry's open, the kennel's a-yelp,  
 Argument's hot to the close !

## XIV.

One dissertates, he is candid—  
 Two must discept,—has distinguished !  
 Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did :  
 Four protests, Five makes a dart at the  
     thing wished—  
 Back to One, goes the case bandied !

## XV.

One says his say with a difference—  
 More of expounding, explaining !  
 All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance—  
 Now there's a truce, all's subdued, self-  
     restraining—  
 Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

## XVI.

One is incisive, corrosive—  
 Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant—

Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive—  
 Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant—  
 Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve !

## XVII.

Now, they ply axes and crowbars—  
 Now, they prick pins at a tissue  
 Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's  
 Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue ?  
 Where is our gain at the Two-bars ?

## XVIII.

*Est fuga, volvitur rota !*  
 On we drift. Where looms the dim port ?  
 One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota—  
 Something is gained, if one caught but the import—  
 Show it us—Hugues of Saxe-Gotha !

## XIX.

What with affirming, denying,  
 Holding, risposting, subjoining,  
 All's like . . . it's like . . . for an instance  
 I'm trying . . .  
 There ! See our roof, its gilt moulding  
 and groining  
 Under those spider-webs lying !

## XX.

So your figure broadens and thickens,  
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,  
Till one exclaims—"But where's music, the  
dickens?  
Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web  
strengthens  
Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?"

## XXI.

I for man's effort am zealous.  
Prove me such censure's unfounded!  
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—  
Hopes 'twas for something his organ-pipes  
sounded,  
Tiring three boys at the bellows?

## XXII.

Is it your moral of Life?  
Such a web, simple and subtle,  
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,  
Backward and forward each throwing his  
shuttle,  
Death ending all with a knife?

## XXIII.

Over our heads Truth and Nature—  
Still our life's zigzags and dodges,  
Ins and outs weaving a new legislature—

God's gold just shining its last where that  
lodges  
Palled beneath Man's usurpature !

## XXIV.

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,  
Cherub and trophy and garland.  
Nothings grow something which quietly  
closes  
Heaven's earnest eye,—not a glimpse of  
the far land  
Gets through our comments and glozes.

## XXV.

Ah, but traditions, inventions,  
(Say we and make up a visage)  
So many men with such various intentions  
Down the past ages must know more than  
this age !  
Leave the web all its dimensions !

## XXVI.

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf?  
Proved a mere mountain in labour?  
Better submit—try again—what's the clef?  
'Faith, it's no trifle for pipe and for  
tabor—  
Four flats—the minor in F.

## XXVII.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger.

Learning it once, who would lose it?

Yet all the while a misgiving will linger—

Truth's golden o'er us although we refuse  
it—

Nature, thro' dust-clouds we fling her?

## XXVIII.

Hugues! I advise *meâ pœnâ*

(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)

Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the  
arena!

Say the word, straight I unstopp the Full-  
Organ,

Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

## XXIX.

While in the roof, if I'm right there—

. . . Lo, you, the wick in the socket!

Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!

Down it dips, gone like a rocket!

What, you want, do you, to come unawares,  
Sweeping the church up for first morning-  
prayers,

And find a poor devil at end of his cares

At the foot of your rotten-planked rat-  
riddled stairs?

Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

## BEFORE.

## I.

LET them fight it out, friend! things have gone too far.

God must judge the couple! leave them as they are

—Whichever one's the guiltless, to his glory,  
And whichever one the guilt's with, to my story.

## II.

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,

Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,

Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,

Heaven with snaky Hell, in torture and entoilment?

## III.

Which of them's the culprit, how must he conceive

God's the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve!

'Tis but decent to profess oneself beneath her.

Still, one must not be too much in earnest either.

## IV.

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes,  
 Then go live his life out ! life will try his  
 nerves,  
 When the sky, which noticed all, makes no  
 disclosure,  
 And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

## V.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of  
 rose,  
 Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him  
 as he goes.  
 For he'sinsto guess the purpose of the garden,  
 With the sly mute thing beside there for a  
 warden.

## VI.

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant to  
 his side,  
 A leer and lie in every eye on its obsequious  
 hide ?  
 When will come an end of all the mock  
 obeisance,  
 And the price appear that pays for the mis-  
 feasance ?

## VII.

So much for the culprit. Who's the martyred  
 man ?  
 Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he  
 can.

He that strove thus evil's lump with good to  
leaven,  
Let him give his blood at last and get his  
heaven.

## VIII.

All or nothing, stake it ! trusts he God or no ?  
Thus far and no farther ? farther ? be it so.  
Now, enough of your chicane of prudent  
pauses,  
Sage provisos, sub-intents, and saving-  
clauses.

## IX.

Ah, "forgive" you bid him ? While God's  
champion lives,  
Wrong shall be resisted : dead, why he  
forgives.  
But you must not end my friend ere you  
begin him ;  
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while  
breath is in him.

## X.

Once more—Will the wronger, at this last of  
all,  
Dare to say "I did wrong," rising in his  
fall ?  
No ?—Let go, then—both the fighters to  
their places—  
While I count three, step you back as many  
paces.

## AFTER.

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at first  
Let the corpse do its worst.

How he lies in his rights of a man !  
Death has done all death can.  
And absorbed in the new life he leads,  
He recks not, he heeds  
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance—both strike  
On his senses alike,  
And are lost in the solemn and strange  
Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase  
His offence, my disgrace ?  
I would we were boys as of old  
In the field, by the fold—  
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn  
Were so easily borne.

I stand here now, he lies in his place—  
Cover the face.

## IN THREE DAYS.

## I.

So, I shall see her in three days  
And just one night, but nights are short,

Then two long hours, and that is morn.  
 See how I come, unchanged, unworn—  
 Feel, where my life broke off from thine,  
 How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—  
 Only a touch and we combine !

## II.

Too long, this time of year, the days !  
 But nights—at least the nights are short.  
 As night shows where her one moon is,  
 A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,  
 So, life's night gives my lady birth  
 And my eyes hold her ! what is worth  
 The rest of heaven, the rest of earth ?

## III.

O loaded curls, release your store  
 Of warmth and scent as once before  
 The tingling hair did, lights and darks  
 Out-breaking into fairy sparks  
 When under curl and curl I pried  
 After the warmth and scent inside,  
 Thro' lights and darks how manifold—  
 The dark inspired, the light controlled !  
 As early Art embrowned the gold.

## IV.

What great fear—should one say, “Three  
     days  
 That change the world, might change as  
     well

Your fortune ; and if joy delays,  
Be happy that no worse befell." "  
What small fear—if another says,  
" Three days and one short night beside  
May throw no shadow on your ways ;  
But years must teem with change untried,  
With chance not easily defied,  
With an end somewhere undescribed." "  
No fear !—or if a fear be born  
This minute, it dies out in scorn.  
Fear ? I shall see her in three days  
And one night, now the nights are short,  
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

## IN A YEAR.

## I.

NEVER any more  
While I live,  
Need I hope to see his face  
As before.  
Once his love grown chill,  
Mine may strive—  
Bitterly we re-embrace,  
Single still.

## II.

Was it something said,  
Something done,

Vexed him? was it touch of hand,  
 Turn of head?  
 Strange! that very way  
 Love begun.  
 I as little understand  
 Love's decay.

## III.

When I sewed or drew,  
 I recall  
 How he looked as if I sang,  
 —Sweetly too.  
 If I spoke a word,  
 First of all  
 Up his cheek the colour sprang,  
 Then he heard.

## IV.

Sitting by my side,  
 At my feet,  
 So he breathed the air I breathed,  
 Satisfied!  
 I, too, at love's brim  
 Touched the sweet:  
 I would die if death bequeathed  
 Sweet to him.

## V.

“ Speak, I love thee best ! ”  
 He exclaimed.

" Let thy love my own foretell,—"  
 I confessed :  
 " Clasp my heart on thine  
   Now unblamed,  
 Since upon thy soul as well  
   Hangeth mine ! "

## VI.

Was it wrong to own,  
   Being truth ?  
 Why should all the giving prove  
   His alone ?  
 I had wealth and ease,  
   Beauty, youth—  
 Since my lover gave me love,  
   I gave these.

## VII

That was all I meant,  
   —To be just,  
 And the passion I had raised  
   To content.  
 Since he chose to change  
   Gold for dust,  
 If I gave him what he praised  
   Was it strange ?

## VIII.

Would he loved me yet,  
   On and on,

While I found some way undreamed  
 —Paid my debt !  
 Gave more life and more,  
 Till, all gone,  
 He should smile, “ She never seemed  
 Mine before.

## IX.

“ What—she felt the while,  
 Must I think ?  
 Love’s so different with us men,”  
 He should smile.  
 “ Dying for my sake  
 White and pink !  
 Can’t we touch these bubbles then  
 But they break ? ”

## X.

Dear, the pang is brief,  
 Do thy part,  
 Have thy pleasure. How perplext  
 Grows belief !  
 Well, this cold clay clod  
 Was man’s heart.  
 Crumble it—and what comes next ?  
 Is it God ?

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM  
ABROAD.

## I.

OH, to be in England  
Now that April's there,  
And whoever wakes in England  
Sees, some morning, unaware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood  
sheaf  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard  
bough  
In England—now !

## II.

And after April, when May follows,  
And the whitethroat builds, and all the  
swallows—  
Hark ! where my blossomed pear-tree in the  
hedge  
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
Blossoms and dewdrops—a tthe bent spray's  
edge—  
That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song  
twice over,

Lest you should think he never could re-capture  
The first fine careless rapture !  
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,  
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
The buttercups, the little children's dower,  
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !

### HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA.

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the north-west died away ;  
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay ;  
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay ;  
In the dimmest north-east distance, dawned Gibraltar grand and gray ;  
“Here and here did England help me,— how can I help England ?”—say,  
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,  
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

## THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL.

## A PICTURE OF FANO.

## I.

DEAR and great Angel, wouldest thou only leave  
That child, when thou hast done with him,  
for me !

Let me sit all the day here, that when eve  
Shall find performed thy special ministry  
And time come for departure, thou, suspending  
Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,  
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

## II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,  
From where thou standest now, to where  
I gaze,  
And suddenly my head be covered o'er  
With those wings, white above the child  
who prays  
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee  
guarding  
Me, out of all the world ; for me, discarding  
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes  
its door !

## III.

I would not look up thither past thy head  
Because the door opes, like that child, I  
know,

For I should have thy gracious face instead,  
Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend  
me low  
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands  
together,  
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether  
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garments  
spread ?

## IV.

If this was ever granted, I would rest  
My head beneath thine, while thy healing  
hands  
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,  
Pressing the brain, which too much thought  
expands,  
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing  
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,  
And all lay quiet, happy and supprest.

## V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be  
repaired !  
I think how I should view the earth and  
skies  
And sea, when once again my brow was bared  
After thy healing, with such different eyes.  
O world, as God has made it ! love is beauty :  
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.  
What further may be sought for or  
declared ?

## VI.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach  
(Alfred, dear friend) that little child to pray,  
Holding the little hands up, each to each  
    Pressed gently,—with his own head turnec  
        away  
Over the earth where so much lay before  
    him  
Of work to do, though heaven was opening  
    o'er him,  
    And he was left at Fano by the beach.

## VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went  
    To sit and see him in his chapel there.  
And drink his beauty to our soul's content  
    —My angel with me too : and since I care  
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power  
And glory comes this picture for a dower,  
    Fraught with a pathos so magnificent).

## VIII.

And since he did not work so earnestly  
    At all times, and has else endured some  
        wrong,—  
I took one thought his picture struck from  
    me,  
    And spread it out, translating it to song.

My Love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?

How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?  
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

“ HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX.”

[16—.]

I.

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;  
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all  
three;

“Good speed!” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;

“Speed!” echoed the wall to us galloping through;

Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,

And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace

Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;

I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,

Then shortened each stirrup, and set the  
    pique right,  
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker  
    the bit,  
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

## III.

'Twas moonset at starting ; but while we  
    drew near  
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned  
    clear ;  
At Boom, a great yellow star came out  
    to see ;  
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as  
    could be ;  
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard  
    the half-chime,  
So Joris broke silence with, " Yet there  
    is time ! "

## IV.

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,  
And against him the cattle stood black  
    every one,  
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping  
    past,  
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at  
    last,  
With resolute shoulders, each butting away  
The haze, as some bluff river headland its  
    spray.

## v.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp  
ear bent back  
For my voice, and the other pricked out  
on his track ;  
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that  
glance  
O'er its white edge at me, his own master,  
askance !  
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye  
and anon  
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

## vi.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris,  
“ Stay spur !  
“ Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's  
not in her,  
“ We'll remember at Aix”—for one heard  
the quick wheeze  
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and  
staggering knees,  
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the  
flank,  
As down on her haunches she shuddered  
and sank.

## vii.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,  
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in  
the sky ;





The broad sun above laughed a pitiless  
laugh,  
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright  
stubble like chaff ;  
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang  
white,  
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is  
in sight!"

## viii.

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a  
moment his roan  
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a  
stone ;  
And there was my Roland to bear the whole  
weight  
Of the news which alone could save Aix  
from her fate,  
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the  
brim,  
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets'  
rim.

## ix.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster  
let fall,  
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and  
all,  
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,  
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse  
without peer ;

Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any  
noise, bad or good,  
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and  
stood.

## x.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round  
As I sate with his head 'twixt my knees on  
the ground,  
And no voice but was praising this Roland of  
mine,  
As I poured down his throat our last measure  
of wine,  
Which (the burgesses voted by common  
consent)  
Was no more than his due who brought good  
news from Ghent.

## A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S.

## I.

OH, Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to  
find !  
I can hardly misconceive you ; it would  
prove me deaf and blind ;  
But although I give you credit, 'tis with  
such a heavy mind !

## II.

Here you come with your old music, and  
here's all the good it brings.  
What, they lived once thus at Venice, where  
the merchants were the kings,  
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used  
to wed the sea with rings?

## III.

Ay, because the sea's the street there; and  
'tis arched by . . . what you call  
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it,  
where they kept the carnival!  
I was never out of England—it's as if I saw  
it all!

## IV.

Did young people take their pleasure when  
the sea was warm in May?  
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning  
ever to mid-day,  
When they made up fresh adventures for the  
morrow, do you say?

## V.

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round  
and lips so red,—  
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a  
bell-flower on its bed,  
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a  
man might base his head?

## VI.

Well (and it was graceful of them) they'd  
 break talk off and afford  
 —She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he to  
 finger on his sword,  
 While you sat and played Toccatas, stately  
 at the clavichord ?

## VII.

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive,  
 sixths diminished sigh on sigh,  
 Told them something? Those suspensions,  
 those solutions—"Must we die?"  
 Those commiserating sevenths—"Life might  
 last! we can but try!"

## VIII.

"Were you happy?"—"Yes."—"And are  
 you still as happy?"—"Yes—and you?"  
 —"Then more kisses"—"Did I stop them,  
 when a million seemed so few?"  
 Hark—the dominant's persistence, till it  
 must be answered to!

## IX.

So an octave struck the answer. Oh, they  
 praised you, I dare say!  
 "Brave Galuppi! that was music! good  
 alike at grave and gay!  
 I can always leave off talking, when I hear  
 a master play."

## X.

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in  
due time, one by one,  
Some with lives that came to nothing, some  
with deeds as well undone,  
Death came tacitly and took them where  
they never see the sun.

## XI.

But when I sit down to reason,—think to  
take my stand nor swerve  
Till I triumph o'er a secret wrung from  
nature's close reserve,  
In you come with your cold music, till I  
creep thro' every nerve.

## XII.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking  
where a house was burned—  
“Dust and ashes, dead and done with,  
Venice spent what Venice earned!  
The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a  
soul can be discerned.

## XIII.

“Yours for instance, you know physics,  
something of geology,  
Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall  
rise in their degree;  
Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll not  
die, it cannot be!

## XIV.

“As for Venice and its people, merely born  
 to bloom and drop,  
 Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth  
 and folly were the crop,  
 What of soul was left, I wonder, when the  
 kissing had to stop?

## XV.

“Dust and ashes!” So you creak it, and  
 I want the heart to scold.  
 Dear dead women, with such hair, too—  
 what’s become of all the gold  
 Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I  
 feel chilly and grown old.

## MEMORABILIA.

## I.

AH, did you once see Shelley plain,  
 And did he stop and speak to you?  
 And did you speak to him again?  
 How strange it seems, and new!

## II.

But you were living before that.  
 And you are living after,  
 And the memory I started at—  
 My starting moves your laughter.

## III.

I crossed a moor with a name of its own  
 And a use in the world no doubt,  
 Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone  
 'Mid the blank miles round about—

## IV.

For there I picked up on the heather  
 And there I put inside my breast  
 A moulted feather, an eagle-feather—  
 Well, I forget the rest.

## ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,  
 No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:  
 Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.  
 You turn your face, but does it bring your  
 heart?  
 I'll work then for your friend's friend, never  
 fear,  
 Treat his own subject after his own way,  
 Fix his own time, accept too his own price,  
 And shut the money into this small hand  
 When next it takes mine. Will it?  
 tenderly?  
 Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love!

I often am much wearier than you think,  
This evening more than usual, and it seems  
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit  
Here by the window with your hand in  
mine

And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,  
Both of one mind, as married people use,  
Quietly, quietly, the evening through,  
I might get up to-morrow to my work  
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.  
To-morrow how you shall be glad for this !  
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,  
And mine the man's bared breast she curls  
inside.

Don't count the time lost, either ; you must  
serve

For each of the five pictures we require—  
It saves a model. So ! keep looking so—  
My serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds !  
—How could you ever prick those perfect  
ears,

Even to put the pearl there ! oh, so sweet—  
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,  
Which everybody looks on and calls his,  
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,  
While she looks—no one's : very dear, no  
less !

You smile ? why, there's my picture ready  
made.

There's what we painters call our harmony !  
A common grayness silvers everything,—

All in a twilight, you and I alike  
—You, at the point of your first pride in me  
(That's gone you know), but I, at every  
point ;  
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned  
down  
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.  
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-  
top ;  
That length of convent-wall across the way  
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside ;  
The last monk leaves the garden ; days  
decrease  
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.  
Eh ? the whole seems to fall into a shape  
As if I saw alike my work and self  
And all that I was born to be and do,  
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's  
hand.  
How strange now, looks the life he makes  
us lead !  
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are :  
I feel he laid the fetter : let it lie !  
This chamber for example—turn your head—  
All that's behind us ! you don't understand  
Nor care to understand about my art.  
But you can hear at least when people  
speak ;  
And that cartoon, the second from the door  
—It is the thing, Love ! so such things  
should be—

Behold Madonna, I am bold to say.  
I can do with my pencil what I know,  
What I see, what at bottom of my heart  
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—  
Do easily, too—when I say perfectly  
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are  
judge

Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,  
And just as much they used to say in France.  
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it !

No sketches first, no studies, that's long  
past—

I do what many dream of all their lives—  
—Dream? strive to do, and agonise to do,  
And fail in doing. I could count twenty  
such

On twice your fingers, and not leave this  
town,

Who strive—you don't know how the others  
strive

To paint a little thing like that you smeared  
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,  
Yet do much less, so much less, some one  
says,

(I know his name, no matter) so much less !  
Well, less is more, Lucrezia ! I am judged.  
There burns a truer light of God in them,  
In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-  
up brain,  
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to  
prompt

This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand  
of mine.

Their works drop groundward, but them-  
selves, I know,  
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to  
me,

Enter and take their place there sure enough,  
Though they come back and cannot tell the  
world.

My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.  
The sudden blood of these men ! at a word—  
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils  
too.

I, painting from myself and to myself,  
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's  
blame

Or their praise either. Somebody remarks  
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,  
His hue mistaken—what of that ? or else,  
Rightly traced and well ordered—what of  
that ?

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his  
grasp,

Or what's a Heaven for ? all is silver-gray  
Placid and perfect with my art—the worst !  
I know both what I want and what might  
gain—

And yet how profitless to know, to sigh  
“ Had I been two, another and myself,  
Our head would have o'erlooked the world ! ”  
No doubt.

Yonder's a work, now, of that famous youth  
The Urbinate who died five years ago.  
('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)  
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,  
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to  
see,  
Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish  
him,  
Above and through his art—for it gives  
way ;  
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—  
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,  
Its body, so to speak ! its soul is right,  
He means right—that, a child may understand.

Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it.  
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—  
Out of me ! out of me ! And wherefore  
out ?

Had you enjoined them on me, given me  
soul,

We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.  
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I  
think—

More than I merit, yes, by many times.  
But had you—oh, with the same perfect  
brow,

And perfect eyes, and more than perfect  
mouth,

And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird  
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—

Had you, with these the same, but brought  
a mind !

Some women do so. Had the mouth there  
urged

" God and the glory ! never care for gain.  
The present by the future, what is that ?  
Live for fame, side by side with Angelo—  
Rafael is waiting. Up to God all three ! "  
I might have done it for you. So it seems—  
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.  
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self ;  
The rest avail not. Why do I need you ?  
What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo ?  
In this world, who can do a thing, will not—  
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :  
Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too,  
the power—

And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,  
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.  
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,  
That I am something underrated here,  
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the  
truth.

I dared not, do you know, leave home all  
day,

For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.  
The best is when they pass and look aside ;  
But they speak sometimes ; I must bear  
it all.

Well may they speak ! That Francis, that  
first time,

And that long festal year at Fontainebleau !  
I surely then could sometimes leave the  
ground,  
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,  
In that humane great monarch's golden  
look,—  
One finger in his beard or twisted curl  
Over his mouth's good mark that made the  
smile,  
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,  
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,  
You painting proudly with his breath on me,  
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,  
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire  
of souls  
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those  
hearts,—  
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,  
This in the back-ground, waiting on my  
work,  
To crown the issue with a last reward !  
A good time, was it not, my kingly days ?  
And had you not grown restless—but I  
know—  
'Tis done and past ; 'twas right, my instinct  
said ;  
Too live the life grew, golden and not gray—  
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should  
tempt  
Out of the grange whose four walls make  
his world.

How could it end in any other way?  
You called me, and I came home to your  
heart.  
The triumph was to have ended there—then if  
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?  
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's  
gold,

You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!  
“Rafael did this, Andrea painted that—  
The Roman's is the better when you pray,  
But still the other's Virgin was his wife—”  
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge  
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows  
My better fortune, I resolve to think.  
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,  
Said one day Angelo, his very self,  
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these  
years . . .

(When the young man was flaming out his  
thoughts

Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,  
Too lifted up in heart because of it)  
“Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub  
Goes up and down our Florence, none cares  
how,

Who, were he set to plan and execute  
As you are pricked on by your popes and  
kings,  
Would bring the sweat into that brow of  
yours!”  
To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.

I hardly dare—yet, only you to see,  
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line  
should go !

Ay, but the soul ! he's Rafael ! rub it out !  
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,  
(What he ? why, who but Michael Angelo ?  
Do you forget already words like those ?)  
If really there was such a chance, so lost,  
Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more  
pleased.

Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed !  
This hour has been an hour ! Another smile ?  
If you would sit thus by me every night  
I should work better, do you comprehend ?  
I mean that I should earn more, give you  
more.

See, it is settled dusk now ; there's a star ;  
Morello's gone, the watch-lights shew the  
wall,  
The cue-owls speak the name we call them  
by.

Come from the window, Love,—come in,  
at last,

Inside the melancholy little house  
We built to be so gay with. God is just.  
King Francis may forgive me. Oft at nights  
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,  
The walls become illumined, brick from brick  
Distinct, instead of mortar fierce bright gold,  
That gold of his I did cement them with !  
Let us but love each other. Must you go ?

That Cousin here again ? he waits outside ?  
Must see you—you, and not with me ?

Those loans !

More gaming debts to pay ? you smiled for  
that ?

Well, let smiles buy me ! have you more to  
spend ?

While hand and eye and something of a  
heart

Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it  
worth ?

I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit  
The gray remainder of the evening out,  
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly  
How I could paint were I but back in France,  
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,  
Not yours this time ! I want you at my side  
To hear them—that is, Michael Angelo—  
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.

Will you ? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.  
I take the subjects for his corridor,  
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,  
And throw him in another thing or two  
If he demurs ; the whole should prove enough  
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,  
What's better and what's all I care about,  
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff.

Love, does that please you ? Ah, but what  
does he,  
The Cousin ! what does he to please you  
more ?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.  
I regret little, I would change still less.  
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?  
The very wrong to Francis! it is true  
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,  
And built this house and sinned, and all  
is said.

My father and my mother died of want,  
Well, had I riches of my own? you see  
How one gets rich! Let each one bear  
his lot.

They were born poor, lived poor, and poor  
they died:

And I have laboured somewhat in my  
time

And not been paid profusely. Some good  
son

Paint my two hundred pictures—let him  
try!

No doubt, there's something strikes a  
balance. Yes,

You loved me quite enough, it seems to-  
night.

This must suffice me here. What would one  
have?

In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more  
chance—

Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,  
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,  
For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me  
To cover—the three first without a wife,

While I have mine ! So—still they over-  
come

Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle ! Go, my Love.

### CLEON.

"As certain also of your own poets have said"—

CLEON the poet (from the sprinkled isles,  
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,  
And laugh their pride when the light wave  
lisps "Greece"),—  
To Protus in his Tyranny : much health !

They give thy letter to me, even now :  
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.  
The master of thy galley still unlades  
Gift after gift ; they block my court at last  
And pile themselves along its portico  
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee :  
And one white she-slave from the group  
dispersed  
Of black and white slaves, (like the chequer-  
work  
Pavement, at once my nation's work and  
gift,  
Now covered with this settle-down of doves)  
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest

Woven of sea-wools, with her two white  
hands  
Commends to me the strainer and the cup  
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence !  
For so shall men remark, in such an act  
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,  
Thy recognition of the use of life ;  
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate  
To help on life in straight ways, broad  
enough  
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.  
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,  
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of  
toil,  
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,  
Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim  
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,  
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's  
sake—  
Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope  
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,  
Whence, all the tumult of the building  
hushed,  
Thou first of men mightst look out to the  
east.  
The vulgar saw thy tower ; thou sawest  
the sun.  
For this, I promise on thy festival  
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,

Making this slave narrate thy fortunes,  
    speak  
Thy great words, and describe thy royal  
    face—  
Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the  
    most  
Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me  
here.

It is as thou hast heard : in one short life  
I, Cleon, have effected all those things  
Thou wonderfully dost enumerate.  
That epos on thy hundred plates of gold  
Is mine—and also mine the little chaunt,  
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark  
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their  
    nets.

The image of the sun-god on the phare,  
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine ;  
The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length,  
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine  
    too.

I know the true proportions of a man  
And woman also, not observed before ;  
And I have written three books on the soul,  
Proving absurd all written hitherto,  
And putting us to ignorance again.  
For music,—why, I have combined the  
    moods,  
Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine ;

Thus much the people know and recognise,  
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel  
not.

We of these latter days, with greater mind  
Than our forerunners, since more composite,  
Look not so great (beside their simple way)  
To a judge who only sees one way at once,  
One mind-point, and no other at a time,—  
Compares the small part of a man of us  
With some whole man of the heroic age,  
Great in his way,—not ours, nor meant for  
ours,

And ours is greater, had we skill to know.  
Yet, what we call this life of men on earth,  
This sequence of the soul's achievements  
here,

Being, as I find much reason to conceive,  
Intended to be viewed eventually  
As a great whole, not analysed to parts,  
But each part having reference to all,—  
How shall a certain part, pronounced com-  
plete,

Endure effacement by another part?  
Was the thing done?—Then what's to do  
again?

See, in the chequered pavement opposite,  
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,  
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—  
He did not overlay them, superimpose  
The new upon the old and blot it out,  
But laid them on a level in his work,

Making at last a picture ; there it lies.  
So, first the perfect separate forms were  
made,  
The portions of mankind—and after, so,  
Occurred the combination of the same.  
Or where had been a progress, otherwise ?  
Mankind, made up of all the single men,—  
In such a synthesis the labour ends.  
Now, mark me—those divine men of old time  
Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one  
point  
The outside verge that rounds our faculty ;  
And where they reached, who can do more  
than reach ?  
It takes but little water just to touch  
At some one point the inside of a sphere,  
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the  
rest  
In due succession : but the finer air  
Which not so palpably nor obviously,  
Though no less universally, can touch  
The whole circumference of that emptied  
sphere,  
Fills it more fully than the water did ;  
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself  
Resolved into a subtler element.  
And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full  
Up to the visible height—and after, void ;  
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.  
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to  
Zeus

To vindicate his purpose in its life—  
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?  
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,  
That he or other God, descended here  
And, once for all, showed simultaneously  
What, in its nature, never can be shown  
Piecemeal or in succession ;—showed, I say,  
The worth both absolute and relative  
Of all His children from the birth of time,  
His instruments for all appointed work.  
I now go on to image,—might we hear  
The judgment which should give the due to  
each,  
Show where the labour lay and where the  
ease,  
And prove Zeus' self, the latent, everywhere!  
This is a dream. But no dream, let us hope,  
That years and days, the summers and the  
springs  
Follow each other with unwaning powers—  
The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer  
far  
Through culture, than the wild wealth of  
the rock;  
The suave plum than the savage-tasted  
drupe;  
The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet;  
The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn  
flowers;  
That young and tender crescent-moon, thy  
slave,

Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,  
Refines upon the women of my youth.  
What, and the soul alone deteriorates?  
I have not chanted verse like Homer's, no—  
Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor  
carved

And painted men like Phildias and his friend :  
I am not great as they are, point by point :  
But I have entered into sympathy  
With these four, running these into one soul,  
Who, separate, ignored each others' arts.  
Say, is it nothing that I know them all?  
The wild flower was the larger—I have  
dashed

Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's  
Honey with wine, and driven its seed to  
fruit,

And show a better flower if not so large.  
I stand, myself. Refer this to the gods  
Whose gift alone it is ! which, shall I dare  
(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext  
That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,  
Discourse of lightly or deprecate ?  
It might have fallen to another's hand—what  
then ?

I pass too surely—let at least truth stay !

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.  
This being with me as I declare, O king,  
My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,  
So done by me, accepted so by men—

Thou askest if (my soul thus in men's hearts)  
 I must not be accounted to attain  
 The very crown and proper end of life.  
 Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,  
 I face death with success in my right hand :  
 Whether I fear death less than dost thyself  
 The fortunate of men. "For" (writest thou)  
 "Thou leavest much behind, while I leave  
 nought :

Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,  
 The pictures men shall study ; while my life,  
 Complete and whole now in its power and joy  
 Dies altogether with my brain and arm  
 Is lost indeed ; since,—what survives myself?  
 The brazen statue that o'erlooks my grave,  
 Set on the promontory which I named.  
 And that—some supple courtier of my heir  
 Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,  
 To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.  
 I go, then : triumph thou, who dost not go ! "

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole  
 mind.

Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse  
 Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,  
 That admiration grows as knowledge grows ?  
 That imperfection means perfection hid,  
 Reserved in part, to grace the aftertime ?  
 If, in the morning of philosophy,  
 Ere aught had been recorded, aught per-  
 ceived,

Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst  
have looked

On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,  
Ere man had yet appeared upon the stage—  
Thou wouldest have seen them perfect, and  
deduced

The perfectness of others yet unseen.

Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned  
thee

“Wilt thou go on a step, improve on this,  
Do more for visible creatures than is done?”  
Thou wouldest have answered, “Ay, by  
making each

Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.

All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the  
rock,

The fish strikes through the sea, the snake  
both swims

And slides; the birds take flight, forth range  
the beasts,

Till life's mechanics can no further go—

And all this joy in natural life is put

Like fire from off Thy finger into each,

So exquisitely perfect is the same.

But 'tis pure fire—and they mere matter are;

It has them, not they it: and so I choose,

For man, Thy last premeditated work

(If I might add a glory to this scheme)

That a third thing should stand apart from  
both,

A quality arise within the soul,

Which, intro-active, made to supervise  
And feel the force it has, may view itself,  
And so be happy." Man might live at first  
The animal life : but is there nothing more?  
In due time, let him critically learn  
How he lives ; and, the more he gets to  
know  
Of his own life's adaptabilities,  
The more joy-giving will his life become.  
The man who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably  
said :  
" Let progress end at once,—man make no  
step  
Beyond the natural man, the better beast,  
Using his senses, not the sense of sense."  
In man there's failure, only since he left  
The lower and unconscious forms of life.  
We called it an advance, the rendering plain  
A spirit might grow conscious of that life,  
And, by new lore so added to the old,  
Take each step higher over the brute's head.  
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,  
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the  
soul,  
Which whole surrounding flats of natural  
life  
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to ;  
A tower that crowns a country. But, alas !  
The soul now climbs it just to perish there,

For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream—  
We know this, which we had not else perceived)  
That there's a world of capability  
For joy, spread round about us, meant  
for us,  
Inviting us; and still the soul craves all,  
And still the flesh replies, "Take no jot  
more  
Than ere you climbed the tower to look  
abroad!  
Nay, so much less, as that fatigue has  
brought  
Deduction to it." We struggle—fain to  
enlarge  
Our bounded physical recipiency,  
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,  
Repair the waste of age and sickness. No,  
It skills not: life's inadequate to joy,  
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.  
They praise a fountain in my garden here  
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-spurt  
Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it rise.  
What if I told her, it is just a thread  
From that great river which the hills shut up,  
And mock her with my leave to take the  
same?  
The artificer has given her one small tube  
Past power to widen or exchange—what  
boots

To know she might spout oceans if she could?

She cannot lift beyond her first straight thread,

And so a man can use but a man's joy  
While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to boast,

"See, man, how happy I live, and despair—  
That I may be still happier—for thy use!"

If this were so, we could not thank our Lord,

As hearts beat on to doing: 'tis not so—  
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?

Still, no. If care—where is the sign, I ask—  
And get no answer: and agree in sum,  
O king, with thy profound discouragement,  
Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.

Most progress is most failure! thou sayest well.

The last point now:—thou dost except a case—

Holding joy not impossible to one  
With artist-gifts—to such a man as I—  
Who leave behind me living works indeed;  
For, such a poem, such a painting lives.  
What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,  
Confound the accurate view of what joy is  
(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)  
With feeling joy? confound the knowing how

And showing how to live (my faculty)  
With actually living?—Otherwise  
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?  
Because in my great epos I display  
How divers men young, strong, fair, wise,  
can act—

Is this as though I acted? if I paint,  
Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore  
young?

Methinks I'm older than I bowed myself  
The many years of pain that taught me art!  
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove  
How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is  
more:

But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something  
too.

Yon rower with the moulded muscles there  
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.  
I can write love-odes—thy fair slave's an ode.  
I get to sing of love, when grown too gray  
For being beloved: she turns to that young  
man,

The muscles all a-ripple on his back.  
I know the joy of kingship: well—thou art  
king!

“But,” sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,  
To find thee tripping on a mere word) “what  
Thou writest, paintest, stays: that does not  
die:  
Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,

And Æschylus, because we read his plays!"  
Why, if they live still, let them come and  
take  
Thy slave in my despite—drink from thy  
cup—  
Speak in my place. Thou diest while I  
survive?  
Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,—  
In this, that every day my sense of joy  
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified  
In power and insight) more enlarged, more  
keen;  
While every day my hairs fall more and  
more,  
My hand shakes, and the heavy years  
increase—  
The horror quickening still from year to  
year,  
The consummation coming past escape  
When I shall know most, and yet least  
enjoy—  
When all my works wherein I prove my  
worth,  
Being present still to mock me in men's  
mouths,  
Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,  
I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,  
The man who loved his life so over much,  
Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,  
I dare at times imagine to my need  
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,

Unlimited in capability  
 For joy, as this is in desire for joy,  
 To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us.  
 That, stung by straitness of our life, made  
     strait  
 On purpose to make sweet the life at large—  
 Freed by the throbbing impulse we call  
     death,  
 We burst there as the worm into the fly,  
 Who, while a worm still, wants his wings.  
     But no !  
 Zeus has not yet revealed it ; and alas !  
 He must have done so—were it possible !

Live long and happy, and in that thought  
     die,  
 Glad for what was. Farewell. And for the  
     rest,  
 I cannot tell thy messenger aright  
 Where to deliver what he bears of thine  
 To one called Paulus—we have heard his  
     fame  
 Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—  
 I know not, nor am troubled much to  
     know.  
 Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,  
 As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,  
 Hath access to a secret shut from us ?  
 Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,  
 In stooping to inquire of such an one.  
 As if his answer could impose at all.

He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.  
 Oh, the Jew findeth scholars ! certain slaves  
 Who touched on this same isle, preached  
 him and Christ ;  
 And (as I gathered from a bystander)  
 Their doctrines could be held by no sane man.

## JAMES LEE'S WIFE.

I.—JAMES LEE'S WIFE SPEAKS AT THE  
WINDOW.

## I.

Ah, Love, but a day  
 And the world has changed !  
 The sun's away,  
 And the bird estranged ;  
 The wind has dropped,  
 And the sky's deranged :  
 Summer has stopped.

## II.

Look in my eyes !  
 Wilt thou change too ?  
 Should I fear surprise ?  
 Shall I find aught new  
 In the old and dear,  
 In the good and true,  
 With the changing year ?

## III.

Thou art a man,  
 But I am thy love.  
 For the lake, its swan ;  
 For the dell, its dove ;  
 And for thee—(oh, haste !)  
 Me to bend above,  
 Me, to hold embraced.

## II.—BY THE FIRESIDE.

## I.

Is all our fire of shipwreck wood,  
 Oak and pine ?  
 Oh, for the ills half-understood,  
 The dim dead woe  
 Long ago  
 Befallen this bitter coast of France !  
 Well, poor sailors took their chance ;  
 I take mine.

## II.

A ruddy shaft our fire must shoot  
 O'er the sea :  
 Do sailors eye the casement—mute,  
 Drenched and stark,  
 From their bark—  
 And envy, gnash their teeth for hate  
 O' the warm safe house and happy freight  
 Thee and me ?

## III.

God help you, sailors, at your need !  
 Spare the curse !  
 For some ships, safe in port indeed,  
     Rot and rust,  
     Run to dust,  
 All through worms i' the wood, which crept,  
 Gnawed our hearts out while we slept :  
     That is worse.

## IV.

Who lived here before us two ?  
     Old-world pairs.  
 Did a woman ever—would I knew !—  
     Watch the man  
     With whom began  
 Love's voyage full-sail,—(now, gnash your  
     teeth !)  
 When planks start, open hell beneath  
     Unawares ?

## III.—IN THE DOORWAY.

## I.

THE swallow has set her six young on the  
 rail,  
     And looks seaward :  
 The water's in stripes like a snake, olive-pale  
     To the leeward,—

On the weather-side, black, spotted white  
with the wind.

"Good fortune departs, and disaster's be-  
hind,"—

Hark, the wind with its wants and its  
infinite wail !

## II.

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the saltiness,  
has furled

Her five fingers,

Each leaf like a hand opened wide to the world  
Where there lingers

No glint of the gold, Summer sent for her  
sake :

How the vines writhe in rows, each impaled  
on its stake !

My heart shrivels up and my spirit shrinks  
curled.

## III.

Yet here are we two ; we have love, house  
enough,

With the field there,

This house of four rooms, that field red and  
rough,

Though it yield there,

For the rabbit that robs, scarce a blade or a  
bent ;

If a magpie alight now, it seems an event ;  
And they both will be gone at November's  
rebuff.

## IV.

But why must cold spread? but wherefore  
 bring change  
 To the spirit,  
 God meant should mate his with an infinite  
 range,  
 And inherit  
 His power to put life in the darkness and  
 cold?  
 Oh, live and love worthily, bear and be  
 bold!  
 Whom Summer made friends of, let Winter  
 estrange!

## IV.—ALONG THE BEACH.

## I.

I WILL be quiet and talk with you,  
 And reason why you are wrong.  
 You wanted my love—is that much true?  
 And so I did love, so I do:  
 What has come of it all along?

## II.

I took you—how could I otherwise?  
 For a world to me, and more;  
 For all, love greatens and glorifies  
 Till God's a-glow, to the loving eyes,  
 In what was mere earth before.

## III.

Yes, earth—yes, mere ignoble earth !

Now do I mis-state, mistake ?

Do I wrong your weakness and call it worth ?

Expect all harvest, dread no dearth,

Seal my sense up for your sake ?

## IV.

Oh, Love, Love, no, Love ! not so, indeed !

You were just weak earth, I knew :

With much in you waste, with many a weed,

And plenty of passions run to seed,

But a little good grain too.

## V.

And such as you were, I took you for mine :

Did not you find me yours,

To watch the olive and wait the vine,

And wonder when rivers of oil and wine

Would flow, as the Book assures ?

## VI.

Well; and if none of these good things came,

What did the failure prove ?

The man was my whole world, all the same,

With his flowers to praise or his weeds to  
blame,

And, either or both, to love.

## VII.

Yet this turns now to a fault—there ! there !

That I do love, watch too long,

And wait too well, and weary and wear;  
 And 'tis all an old story, and my despair  
     Fit subject for some new song:

## VIII.

“ How the light, light love, he has wings  
     to fly  
     “ At suspicion of a bond :  
     “ My wisdom has bidden your pleasure good-  
         bye,  
     “ Which will turn up next in a laughing eye,  
         “ And why should you look beyond ? ”

## V.—ON THE CLIFF.

## I.

I LEANED on the turf,  
 I looked at a rock  
 Left dry by the surf ;  
 For the turf, to call it grass were to mock :  
 Dead to the roots, so deep was done  
 The work of the summer sun.

## II.

And the rock lay flat  
 As an anvil's face :  
 No iron like that !  
 Baked dry ; of a weed, of a shell, no trace :  
 Sunshine outside, but ice at the core,  
 Death's altar by the lone shore.

## III.

On the turf, sprang gay  
 With his films of blue,  
 No cricket, I'll say,  
 But a warhorse, barded and chanfroned too,  
 The gift of a quixote-mage to his knight,  
 Real fairy, with wings all right.

## IV.

On the rock, they scorch  
 Like a drop of fire  
 From a brandished torch,  
 Fall two red fans of a butterfly :  
 No turf, no rock : in their ugly stead,  
 See, wonderful blue and red !

## V.

Is it not so  
 With the minds of men ?  
 The level and low,  
 The burnt and bare, in themselves ; but then  
 With such a blue and red grace, not theirs,—  
 Love settling unawares !

## VI.—READING A BOOK, UNDER THE CLIFF.

## I.

“ STILL ailing, Wind ? Wilt be appeased or  
 no ?  
 “ Which needs the other’s office, thou or I ?

“ Dost want to be disburthened of a woe,  
 “ And can, in truth, my voice untie  
 “ Its links, and let it go ?

## II.

“ Art thou a dumb wronged thing that would  
 be righted,  
 “ Entrusting thus thy cause to me ? For-  
 bear !  
 “ No tongue can mend such pleadings ; faith,  
 requited  
 “ With falsehood,—love, at last aware  
 “ Of scorn,—hopes, early blighted,—

## III.

“ We have them ; but I know not any tone  
 “ So fit as thine to falter forth a sorrow :  
 “ Dost think men would go mad without a  
 moan,  
 “ If they knew any way to borrow  
 “ A pathos like thy own ?

## IV.

“ Which sigh wouldst mock, of all the sighs ?  
 The one  
 “ So long escaping from lips starved and  
 blue,  
 “ That lasts while on her pallet-bed the nun  
 “ Stretches her length ; her foot comes  
 through  
 “ The straw she shivers on ;

## V.

" You had not thought she was so tall : and  
 spent,  
 " Her shrunk lids open, her lean fingers  
 shut  
 " Close, close, their sharp and livid nails  
 indent  
 " The clammy palm ; then all is mute :  
 " That way, the spirit went.

## VI.

" Or wouldst thou rather that I understand  
 " Thy will to help me ?—like the dog I  
 found  
 " Once, pacing sad this solitary strand,  
 " Who would not take my food, poor  
 hound,  
 " But whined and licked my hand."

---

## VII.

All this, and more, comes from some young  
 man's pride  
 Of power to see,—in failure and mistake,  
 Relinquishment, disgrace, on every side,—  
 Merely examples for his sake,  
 Helps to his path untried :

## VIII.

Instances he must—simply recognise ?  
 Oh, more than so !—must, with a learner's  
 zeal,

Make doubly prominent, twice emphasise,  
 By added touches that reveal  
 The god in babe's disguise.

## IX.

Oh, he knows what defeat means, and the rest !  
 Himself the undefeated that shall be :  
 Failure, disgrace, he flings them you to test,—  
 His triumph, in eternity  
 Too plainly manifest !

## X.

Whence, judge if he learn forthwith what  
 the wind  
 Means in its moaning—by the happy  
 prompt  
 Instinctive way of youth, I mean ; for kind  
 Calm years, exacting their accompt  
 Of pain, mature the mind :

## XI.

And some midsummer morning, at the lull  
 Just about daybreak, as he looks across  
 A sparkling foreign country, wonderful  
 To the sea's edge for gloom and gloss,  
 Next minute must annul,—

## XII.

Then, when the wind begins among the vines  
 So low, so low, what shall it say but this ?

"Here is the change beginning, here the  
lines

"Circumscribe beauty, set to bliss

"The limit time assigns."

### XIII.

Nothing can be as it has been before ;

Better, so call it, only not the same.

To draw one beauty into our hearts' core,

And keep it changeless ! such our claim :

So answered,—Never more !

### XIV.

Simple? Why this is the old woe o' the  
world ;

Tune, to whose rise and fall we live and  
die.

Rise with it, then ! Rejoice that man is  
hurled

From change to change unceasingly,  
His soul's wings never furled !

### XV.

That's a new question ; still replies the fact,

Nothing endures : the wind moans, saying  
so ;

We moan in acquiescence : there's life's pact,

Perhaps probation—do I know ?

God does : endure his act !

## XVI.

Only, for man, how bitter not to grave  
 On his soul's hands' palms one fair good  
 wise thing  
 Just as he grasped it ! For himself, death's  
 wave ;  
 While time first washes—ah, the sting !—  
 O'er all he'd sink to save.

## VII.—AMONG THE ROCKS.

## I.

OH, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,  
 This autumn morning ! How he sets his  
 bones  
 To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees  
 and feet  
 For the ripple to run over in its mirth ;  
 Listening the while, where on the heap of  
 stones  
 The white breast of the sea-lark twitters  
 sweet.

## II.

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true ;  
 Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and  
 knows.  
 If you loved only what were worth your love,  
 Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you :  
 Make the low nature better by your throes !  
 Give earth yourself, go up for gain above !

## VIII.—BESIDE THE DRAWING BOARD.

## I.

“ As like as a Hand to another Hand ! ”

Whoever said that foolish thing,  
Could not have studied to understand

The counsels of God in fashioning,  
Out of the infinite love of his heart,  
This Hand, whose beauty I praise, apart  
From the world of wonder left to praise,  
If I tried to learn the other ways  
Of love in its skill, or love in its power.

“ As like as a Hand to another Hand ”

Who said that, never took his stand,  
Found and followed, like me, an hour,  
The beauty in this,—how free, how fine  
To fear, almost,—of the limit-line !

As I looked at this, and learned and drew,

Drew and learned, and looked again,  
While fast the happy minutes flew,

Its beauty mounted into my brain,

And a fancy seized me ; I was fain  
To efface my work, begin anew,  
Kiss what before I only drew ;

Ay, laying the red chalk 'twixt my lips,

With soul to help if the mere lips failed,

I kissed all right where the drawing ailed,  
Kissed fast the grace that somehow slips  
Still from one's soulless finger-tips.

## II.

'Tis a clay cast, the perfect thing,  
 From Hand live once, dead long ago :  
 Princess-like it wears the ring  
 To fancy's eye, by which we know  
 That here at length a master found  
 His match, a proud lone soul its mate,  
 As soaring genius sank to ground,  
 And pencil could not emulate  
 The beauty in this,—how free, how fine  
 To fear almost !—of the limit-line.  
 Long ago the god, like me  
 The worm, learned, each in our degree :  
 Looked and loved, learned and drew,  
 Drew and learned and loved again,  
 While fast the happy minutes flew,  
 Till beauty mounted into his brain  
 And on the finger which outvied  
 His art he placed the ring that's there,  
 Still by fancy's eye desried,  
 In token of a marriage rare :  
 For him on earth, his art's despair,  
 For him in heaven, his soul's fit bride.

## III.

Little girl with the poor coarse hand  
 I turned from to a cold clay cast—  
 I have my lesson, understand  
 The worth of flesh and blood at last.  
 Nothing but beauty in a Hand ?

Because he could not change the hue,  
Mend the lines and make them true  
To this which met his soul's demand,—  
Would Da Vinci turn from you ?  
I hear him laugh my woes to scorn—  
“ The fool forsooth is all forlorn  
“ Because the beauty, she thinks best,  
“ Lived long ago or was never born,—  
“ Because no beauty bears the test  
“ In this rough peasant Hand ! Confessed !  
“ ‘ Art is null and study void ! ’  
“ So sayest thou ? So said not I,  
“ Who threw the faulty pencil by,  
“ And years instead of hours employed,  
“ Learning the veritable use  
“ Of flesh and bone and nerve beneath  
“ Lines and hue of the outer sheath,  
“ If haply I might reproduce  
“ One motive of the powers profuse,  
“ Flesh and bone and nerve that make  
“ The poorest coarsest human hand  
“ An object worthy to be scanned  
“ A whole life long for their sole sake.  
“ Shall earth and the cramped moment-space  
“ Yield the heavenly crowning grace ?  
“ Now the parts and then the whole !  
“ Who art thou, with stinted soul  
“ And stunted body, thus to cry  
“ ‘ I love,—shall that be life's strait dole ?  
“ ‘ I must live beloved or die ! ’

" This peasant hand that spins the wool  
 " And bakes the bread, why lives it on,  
 " Poor and coarse with beauty gone,—  
 " What use survives the beauty ? " Fool !

Go, little girl with the poor coarse hand !  
 I have my lesson, shall understand.

#### IX.—ON DECK.

##### I.

THERE is nothing to remember in me,  
 Nothing I ever said with a grace,  
 Nothing I did that you care to see,  
 Nothing I was that deserves a place  
 In your mind, now I leave you, set you free.

##### II.

Conceded ! In turn, concede to me,  
 Such things have been as a mutual flame.  
 Your soul's locked fast ; but, love for a key,  
 You might let it loose, till I grew the  
 same  
 In your eyes, as in mine you stand : strange  
 plea !

##### III.

For then, then, what would it matter to me  
 That I was the harsh ill-favoured one ?  
 We both should be like as pea and pea ;  
 It was ever so since the world begun :  
 So, let me proceed with my reverie.

## IV.

How strange it were if you had all me,  
As I have all you in my heart and  
brain,  
You, whose least word brought gloom or  
glee,  
Who never lifted the hand in vain—  
Will hold mine yet, from over the sea !

## V.

Strange, if a face, when you thought of me,  
Rose like your own face present now,  
With eyes as dear in their due degree,  
Much such a mouth, and as bright a  
brow,  
Till you saw yourself, while you cried “ ‘Tis  
She ! ”

## VI.

Well, you may, you must, set down to me  
Love that was life, life that was love ;  
A tenure of breath at your lips’ decree,  
A passion to stand as your thoughts  
approve,  
A rapture to fall where your foot might be.

## VII.

But did one touch of such love for me  
Come in a word or a look of yours,

Whose words and looks will, circling, flee  
 Round me and round while life endures,—  
 Could I fancy “As I feel, thus feels he”;

## VIII.

Why, fade you might to a thing like me,  
 And your hair grow these coarse hanks of  
 hair,  
 Your skin, this bark of a gnarled tree,—  
 You might turn myself!—should I know  
 or care  
 When I should be dead of joy, James Lee?

## ONE WAY OF LOVE.

## I.

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.  
 Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves.  
 And strew them where Pauline may pass.  
 She will not turn aside? Alas!  
 Let them lie. Suppose they die?  
 The chance was they might take her eye.

## II.

How many a month I strove to suit  
 These stubborn fingers to the lute!  
 To-day I venture all I know.  
 She will not hear my music? So!

Break the string—fold music's wing.  
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing !

## III.

My whole life long I learned to love.  
This hour my utmost art I prove  
And speak my passion—heaven or hell?  
She will not give me heaven? 'Tis well!  
Lose who may—I still can say,  
Those who win heaven, blest are they.

## ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE.

## I.

JUNE was not over,  
Though past the full,  
And the best of her roses  
Had yet to blow,  
When a man I know  
(But shall not discover,  
Since ears are dull,  
And time discloses)

Turned him and said with a man's true air,  
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 'twere,—  
“If I tire of your June, will she greatly  
care?”

## II.

Well, Dear, in-doors with you!  
True, serene deadness  
Tries a man's temper.

What's in the blossom  
 June wears on her bosom?  
 Can it clear scores with you?  
 Sweetness and redness.

*Eadem semper!*

Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!  
 If June mends her bowers now, your hand  
 left unsightly  
 By plucking their roses,—my June will do  
 rightly.

### III.

And after, for pastime,  
 If June be resplendent  
 With flowers in completeness,  
 All petals, no prickles,  
 Delicious as trickles  
 Of wine poured at mass-time,—  
 And choose One indulgent  
 To redness and sweetness:  
 Or if, with experience of man and of  
 spider,  
 She use my June-lightning, the strong insect-  
 ridder,  
 To stop the fresh spinning,—why, June will  
 consider.

## MISCONCEPTIONS.

## I.

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,  
    Making it blossom with pleasure,  
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,  
    Fit for her nest and her treasure.  
    Oh, what a hope beyond measure  
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet  
    hung to,—  
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to !

## II.

This is a heart the Queen leant on,  
    Thrilled in a minute erratic,  
Ere the true bosom she bent on,  
    Meet for love's regal dalmatic.  
    Oh, what a fancy ecstatic  
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went  
    on—  
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent  
    on !

## MAY AND DEATH.

## I.

I WISH that when you died last May,  
    Charles, there had died along with you  
Three parts of spring's delightful things ;  
    Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

## II.

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps !

There must be many a pair of friends  
Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm  
Moon-births and the long evening-ends.

## III.

So, for their sake, be May still May !

Let their new time, as mine of old,  
Do all it did for me : I bid  
Sweet sights and sounds throng manifold.

## IV.

Only, one little sight, one plant,

Woods have in May, that starts up green  
Save a sole streak which, so to speak,  
Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves between,—

## v.

That, they might spare ; a certain wood

Might miss the plant ; their loss were  
small :

But I,—whene'er the leaf grows there,  
Its drop comes from my heart, that's all.

## TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

## I.

I WONDER do you feel to-day  
As I have felt, since, hand in hand,  
We sat down on the grass, to stray  
In spirit better through the land,  
This morn of Rome and May?

## II.

For me, I touched a thought, I know,  
Has tantalised me many times,  
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw  
Mocking across our path) for rhymes  
To catch at and let go.

## III.

Help me to hold it : first it left  
The yellowing fennel, run to seed  
There, branching from the brick-work's cleft,  
Some old tomb's ruin : yonder weed  
Took up the floating west,

## IV.

Where one small orange cup amassed  
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope

Among the honey-meal,—and last  
 Everywhere on the grassy slope  
 I traced it. Hold it fast!

## V.

The champaign with its endless fleece  
 Of feathery grasses everywhere!  
 Silence and passion, joy and peace,  
 An everlasting wash of air—  
 Rome's ghost since her decease.

## VI.

Such life there, through such lengths of  
 hours,  
 Such miracles performed in play,  
 Such primal naked forms of flowers,  
 Such letting Nature have her way  
 While Heaven looks from its towers.

## VII.

How say you? Let us, O my dove,  
 Let us be unashamed of soul,  
 As earth lies bare to heaven above.  
 How is it under our control  
 To love or not to love?

## VIII.

I would that you were all to me,  
 You that are just so much, no more—

Nor yours, nor mine,—nor slave nor free!

Where does the fault lie? what the core  
Of the wound, since wound must be?

## IX.

I would I could adopt your will,

See with your eyes, and set my heart  
Beating by yours, and drink my fill

At your soul's springs,—your part, my  
part

In life, for good and ill.

## X.

No. I yearn upward—touch you close,

Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,

Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose

And love it more than tongue can speak—

Then the good minute goes.

## XI.

Already how am I so far

Out of that minute? Must I go

Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,

Onward, whenever light winds blow,

Fixed by no friendly star?

## XII.

Just when I seemed about to learn!

Where is the thread now? Off again!

The old trick! Only I discern—

Infinite passion and the pain

Of finite hearts that yearn.

## EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES.

## FAME.

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,  
Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime ;  
Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the  
    sods  
Have struggled thro' its binding osier-rods ;  
Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean  
    awry,  
Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by ;  
How the minute gray lichens, plate o'er  
    plate,  
Have softened down the crisp-cut name and  
    date.

## LOVE.

So, the year's done with !  
*(Love me for ever !)*  
All March begun with,  
    April's endeavour ;  
May-wreaths that bound me  
    June needs must sever !  
Now snows fall round me,  
    Quenching June's fever—  
*(Love me for ever !)*

## PROSPICE.

FEAR death?—to feel the fog in my throat,  
     The mist in my face,  
 When the snows begin, and the blasts  
     denote  
         I am nearing the place,  
 The power of the night, the press of the  
     storm,  
         The post of the foe;  
 Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible  
     form,  
         Yet the strong man must go :  
 For the journey is done and the summit  
     attained,  
         And the barriers fall,  
 Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon  
     be gained,  
         The reward of it all.  
 I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,  
     The best and the last !  
 I would hate that death bandaged my eyes  
     and forbore,  
         And bade me creep past.  
 No ! let me taste the whole of it, fare like  
     my peers  
         The heroes of old,  
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's  
     arrears  
         Of pain, darkness and cold. .

For sudden the worst turns the best to the  
brave,

The black minute's at end,  
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that  
rave,

Shall dwindle, shall blend,  
Shall change, shall become first a peace out  
of pain,

Then a light, then thy breast,  
O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee  
again,

And with God be the rest !









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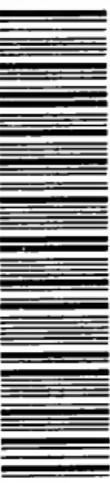
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